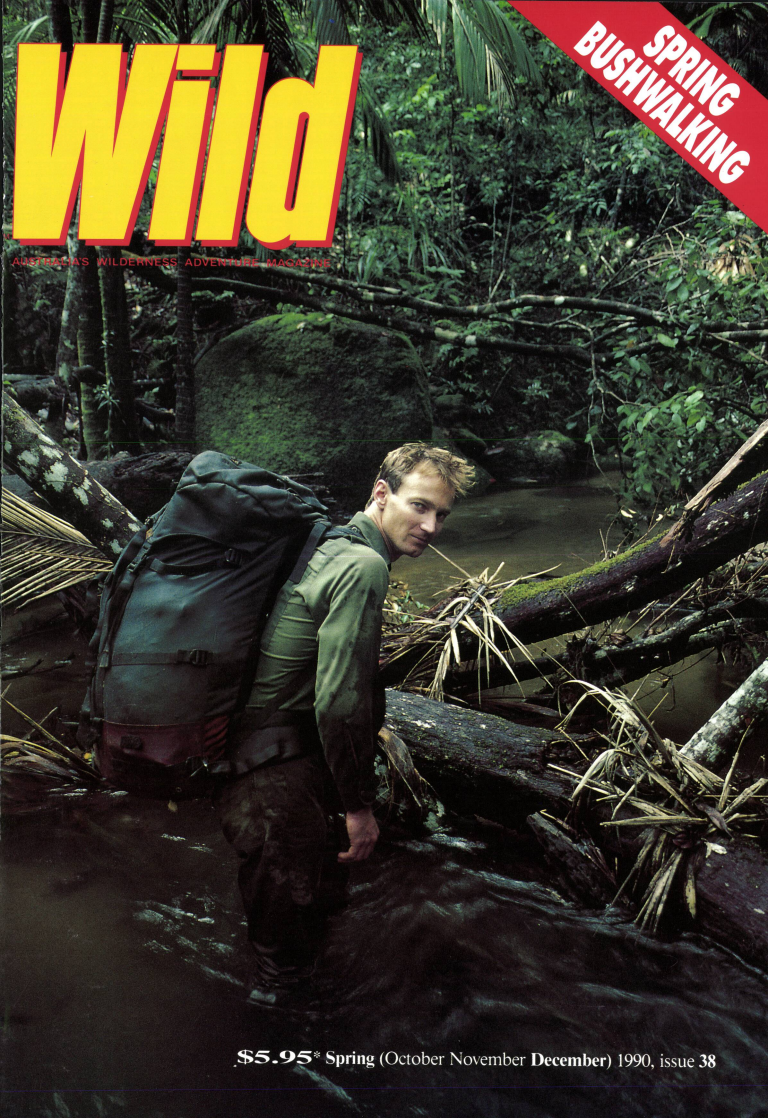


# Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

SPRING  
BUSHWALKING



\$5.95\* Spring (October November December) 1990, issue 38



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**60**  
1929-1989

# Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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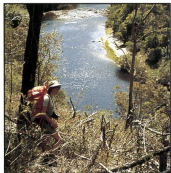
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**Cover** Sometimes a creek offers the best 'track'; in the McIlwraith Range, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. (See Track Notes on page 59.) Photo Ian Brown

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# Conservation: a World Issue

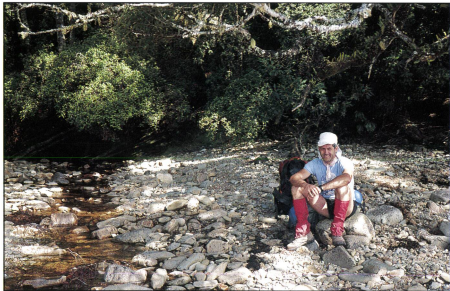
Thinking globally, acting locally

▲ AN UNEXPECTED OUTCOME OF A RECENT visit to the Melbourne Zoo was the poignant reminder that much of our planet's extraordinary and wonderfully varied animal life, at which we marvel from our early childhood, is in danger of being found *only* in such concrete and steel refuges. Many of the animals which we take for granted and enjoy are, in one way or another, what might be considered 'endangered species'; and these are only the more obvious forms of animal life, such as the giant panda, with which the general public is familiar. Thousands of species of fauna, let alone flora, are faced with the prospect of extinction within the lifetime of most *Wild* readers.

Many factors, including poaching and the use of pesticides, are to blame. However, the major cause appears to be the loss of habitat, particularly in Third World countries, for subsistence and—worse—for commercial purposes. Rain forest is burnt in Brazil and Indonesia for short-lived crop land. It is felled on a vast scale in Thailand, Burma and Malaysia for teak and other valuable timber. In Nepal, trees are torn down for firewood. Extensive parts of Africa have been so denuded of vegetation that much of the continent has become a vast dust bowl incapable of sustaining man or beast. The precise cause and location may vary, but the results do not—destruction of the environment, including the soil, water and the atmosphere, follow as surely as night follows day. Innocent wildlife is the first to go. Humans, particularly in Western countries, are able to insulate themselves from the effects of such behaviour for a while by dipping ever deeper into their grab-bag of technological tricks, and ignore the problem by spending more and more money. But we can only go on fouling our nest for so long before we all have to pay the ultimate price.

Until we really believe that it's not 'Brazil's problem' or 'Burma's problem' but *our* problem, there is little hope. If we took this broader attitude, we'd realize that protecting our environment is not only a question of the survival of life on this planet, but also a moral issue. Virtually all environmental damage is due to greed and/or gross inequalities in living standards. If we were to curb our desire for teak panelling in Parliament House and in our own homes; if we were to see to it that the world's wealth was spread equitably, and a decent education was available to all, there'd be no need to pillage the landscape. Indeed, almost *everyone* would vigorously *oppose* such behaviour.

At *Wild* we have long maintained that as good a place as any to start is to join one of the local environmental organizations, such as the Australian Conservation Foundation,



**Above,** Chris resting at Little Deadmans Bay on Tasmania's South Coast Track.

Greenpeace Australia or the Wilderness Society. They have the organization, experience and skills effectively to direct our energy, the energy of the 'little people' who feel that the time has come to 'do something'. We can assist such organizations in many ways: by becoming members and taking an interest in the affairs of one (or more) of them, giving them some of our time, energy and professional expertise, donating money (including through our wills), writing to politicians and the Press, publicizing and supporting their activities; simply, by taking an active interest in public affairs. (As a member of one such organization, at *Wild* we assist conservation bodies by direct donation and, particularly, by allowing them to advertise in *Wild* at half price.)

There is, however, more to be done. We must become personally committed to a simpler and more frugal life-style and to improving the lot of the world's poor, particularly in the Third World. There will be little chance of preserving what is left of the world's natural resources until everyone enjoys at least minimum standards of health, economic security, education, freedom and political stability. This is not a matter of trendy, Italian-suited, Volvo-driving socialism, but of personal involvement, concern and generosity by us all. A good way to start is to consume less ourselves and to support the work of reputable organizations such as the UN's Freedom From Hunger Campaign and similar bodies run by local churches. We can also

commercially boycott those products of which we don't approve and vigorously lobby the Federal Government to prohibit, or at least punitively tax, the import of such products. Goods which readers may wish to target in this connection include South-east Asian rain forest timber, certain animal products including ivory and furs, and products from fish caught by drift netting.

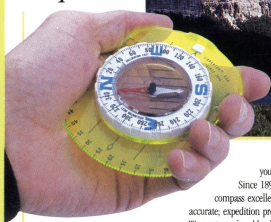
Of course, not all the problems are confined to the Third World. In the West we must closely examine all aspects of our excessive life-style, including our leisure activities. Jamie Pittock's article on Australia's alpine resorts in this issue makes it clear that we can ill afford further 'development' of our scarce and fragile alpine regions. Do Western tourists really need to visit Antarctica? Is it necessary to allow mineral exploration there, particularly considering that, as *Time* magazine recently put it, '...the delicate south-polar environment cannot cope with the pollution that invariably accompanies human activity'? At the moment we are led to believe that existing levels of Australian mining and logging activity are 'essential' for our well-being—even our survival—as a nation. The absurdity of this stance will be revealed when the day dawns on which there is no logging of Australian native forests. Let's hope that will be because we *chose* to stop it. ▲

*Chris Baxter*  
Chris Baxter  
Managing Editor



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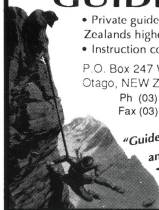


*Nick Cradlock*

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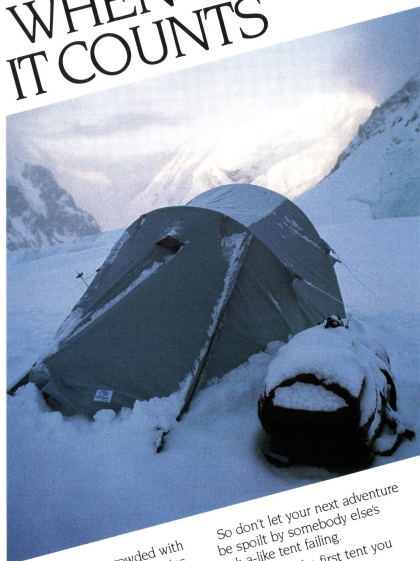
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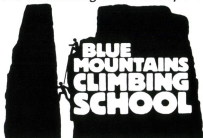
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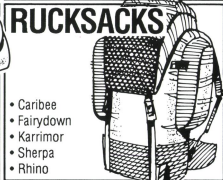
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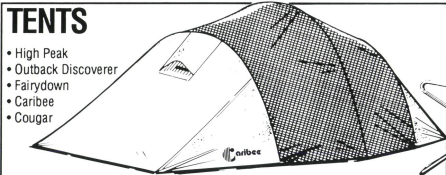
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# How to choose a good sleeping bag...



South-west Ridge of Ama Dablam, Nepal.  
Photo: Michael Groom.

If you're trying to decide what sort of sleeping bag to buy, you'll probably be confused. Not only are there a number of brands, but each one has a range which may include up to twenty different models! The trap that most consumers fall into is to compare bags primarily on price.

If you are in this position, here are the two most important criteria on which to base your selection:

## The Loft of the Down

All downs are not created equal. Their quality is measured in terms of LOFT - the ability of down to expand and fill a space. Don't be misled - the loft rating of a down bag is the single most critical consideration. The actual amount of down in the bag and the design are only secondary. Just remember, the higher the loft rating, the better the down; and better downs can deliver superior warmth for less weight and bulk.

## Good Design

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For a price-conscious consumer, the most obvious difference between sleeping bags is the large cost difference between down and synthetic bags. Experience has shown that choosing a synthetic bag over a down bag on price alone is false economy.

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Whilst your choice of a sleeping bag may not be this serious, for Tim Macartney-Snape it could well have been. He has climbed Everest and relied on his Mountain Designs sleeping bag to stay alive during the incredibly cold and vicious nights on the mountain. Similarly, Robert Swan relied on Mountain Designs sleeping bags to keep him safe for many weeks on his walk to the North Pole.

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# Himalayas

Australians fire on the big ones

**Wild Information**

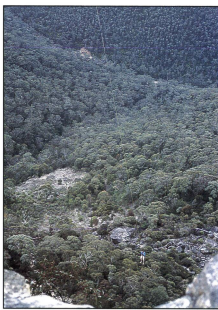
**Back on Top.** In May, Australian Tim Macartney-Snape completed a novel 'first'. He walked all the way from the sea near Calcutta, India, to Mt Everest (8,848 metres), Nepal, which he then climbed solo, reaching the summit by the original South Col route on 11 May. Macartney-Snape is recognized as one of the world's strongest Himalayan climbers. Following his remarkable ascent of Mt Everest with Greg Mortimer in 1984 by an audacious new route on the North Face (see *Wild* no 15), his name became almost a household word in Australia. On his latest ascent, Macartney-Snape had to overcome many obstacles, including running the gauntlet of border guards and civil unrest in Nepal.

Whilst Macartney-Snape's achievement received attention from the better informed sections of the Press, coverage was insignificant compared with that given to the success a few days later, also on the South Col route, of Peter Hillary—the son of Edmund Hillary, who made the first ascent of Mt Everest with Sherpa Tensing in 1953. Peter Hillary, an expatriate New Zealander living near Melbourne, was a member of a large international expedition and had attempted the peak a number of times previously.

On the day Macartney-Snape was enjoying 'the best view in the world', Queensland climber Michael Groom reached the summit of another of the world's 14 peaks of 8,000 metres or more—Cho Oyu (8,153 metres). He was the first Australian to do so, and at the same time became the second Australian to climb two 8,000 metre peaks. Success on Cho Oyu followed his epic ascent in 1988 of Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak, during which he lost his toes due to frostbite. (Pat Cullinan has climbed Broad Peak [8,047 metres] and Mt Everest. Tim Macartney-Snape, who has climbed Mt Everest on two occasions, is the only other Australian to have reached a summit of over 8,000 metres twice.) A member of a small group of fellow 'Banana Republicans', Groom climbed very strongly to summit just after 9.00 am on 11 May. Tony Dignan, on his first major Himalayan climb, struggled courageously with severe altitude sickness to within only 50 metres of the summit, whilst Tim Ball, Steve McDowell and Rick White were forced by altitude sickness to turn back at lower levels.

Australians have now climbed five of the world's fourteen highest peaks, and as we went to press were at work on a sixth: a small party including Greg Child (see the article on him in *Wild* no 37), Greg Mortimer and Lyle Closs was attempting K2 (8,611 metres), the world's second highest, by the long and difficult North Ridge.

**Doing a Loop.** Seldom has any item in *Wild* excited so immediate or so frenzied a response as that provoked by the *Wild* Shot in our last issue. Mark Baker's photo showed Lucas Trihey in mid-air as he plunged to glory from Hanging Rock in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales, connected by a huge, slack



**Above,** 'poor Lucas' Trihey (see *Wildfire* on page 87) after his death-defying plunge pictured in the *Wild Shot* of *Wild* no 37. **Mark Baker, Top,** on top of the world, or at least in sight of it—Michael Groom on the summit of Cho Oyu (8,153 metres). The massive bulk of Mt Everest (8,848 metres), with the North Face visible, dominates the horizon. Michael Groom.

loop of rope to his anchors among the rocks above him. One experienced climber was on the phone the morning after the issue appeared. He'd spent a sleepless night imagining the possible consequences of the jump. More calls and letters followed from readers anxious for the safety—and, in some cases, questioning the sanity—of the Lycra-clad figure in the photo. (See *Wildfire* in this issue.)

We're happy to announce that Trihey suffered no ill effects from his experiment with

gravity. His anchors held firm, and his ropes—dynamic, or slightly elastic, climbing ropes—absorbed much of the impact of the fall. The photo on this page shows him swinging at the end of his ropes after the jump—no doubt enjoying a well-earned rush of adrenalin.

No, a deliberate 50 metre plummet is definitely not normal rockclimbing procedure, and we wouldn't recommend it to anybody, but it demonstrates just how much modern climbing ropes and harnesses are capable of—not to mention modern climbers!

**Altruistic Ascents.** When this issue of *Wild* goes on sale, the Climb for the World will be under way. Initiated by well-known climber and mountain writer Edwin Drummond, and organized on behalf of the United Nations, this symbolic event was to begin on 18 September—UN International Day of Peace—and will end on 23 September. During this period six teams of mountaineers from 11 countries—including Australia's Greg Child—plan to climb by different routes to the summit of the Eiger in the Bernese Alps of Switzerland, each carrying part of a 'flag of flags' constructed for the occasion. They aim to meet atop the Eiger and combine the six portions of the flag. On the same day—23 September—climbers and hill walkers from all UN member nations have been invited to ascend local summits and 'claim them for the UN'. The Climb for the World will mark the first 'Care for the World' day, and programmes of the same name will be launched in support of the UN's work for the global environment.

**Bonington Back.** Famed British mountaineer, climbing writer and photographer Chris Bonington capped a remarkable career in 1985 by reaching the summit of Mt Everest at the age of 50. (See the interview with him in *Wild* no 16.) Bonington will be in Australia during October, and will present a lecture and

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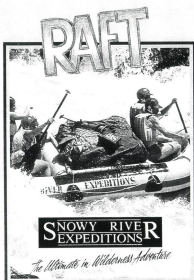
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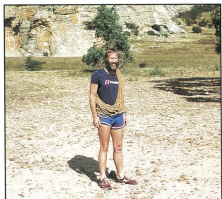
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slide show at the Australian National University in Canberra on 11 October; at the Darling Harbour Convention Centre in Sydney on 12 October; and at the Southern Cross Hotel in Melbourne on 15 October. Starting time on each occasion is 8 pm. Tickets are available from Paddy Pallin shops or at the door.



**Above**, our hero, 'the (other!) big CB', Chris Bonington, at Mt Arapiles, Victoria. Chris Baxter

## NEW SOUTH WALES

**Canyon Abuse.** The Blue Mountains branch of the National Parks Association of NSW conducted a survey during the Australia Day long weekend this year of users of Wollangambe Canyon. Much of what they discovered gave cause for concern.

More than 150 people were on Wollangambe Creek on Saturday and Sunday; about 120 of them went through the canyon, while the rest were day or overnight visitors to the area. Many of the latter were observed catching and eating yabbies from the creek. In addition, there were probably other people on Bell and Du Faur Creeks who used the Wollangambe Track to exit. The association considers that such heavy use warrants greater efforts on the part of the National Parks and Wildlife Service to spread the word about wildlife protection and minimal impact bushwalking, and may justify the establishment of a formal camping area to serve the Wollangambe-Mt Wilson region.

Wollangambe is considered an easy introduction to canyoning, and 90% of the canyoneers surveyed were novices. At least one leader in each of the ten groups to go through on Sunday had been down the Wollangambe before. Only half, however, had insisted that every member of their party wear a wet suit; and fewer than half (45%), that each be equipped with a sturdy, rubberized cotton Li-Lo. The NPA is concerned about the problems which could arise in the event of bad weather or high water, and urges leaders to make participants aware of the possibility—and the danger—of immersion in cold water for up to four hours. At least, all should be able to swim.

**Newcastle-Sydney Express.** Is 'Peter Treseder' a synonym for 'preposterous'? In May this year, the famed (and occasionally defamed) tiger walker ran, swam and canoeed the length of the Great North Walk (see

Information, *Wild* no 34), a route through bushland between the State's two most populous cities. The 258.5 kilometre journey took him 32 hours 35 minutes. The five kilometres of canoeing and one and a half kilometres of swimming replaced two ferry rides taken by most walkers.

## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**Lost and Found.** The Australian Rogaining 24-hour Championships were held in the Brindabella Ranges, near Canberra, on 5-6 May. The overall winners, with 1,650 points, were Chris Benn and David Rowlands from Victoria. The winning Veterans were Bob Mills and Mike Worsley from the ACT (1,450 points). Sue Clarke and Ian Diamond were the winning Mixed team (1,150 points), Joan Ryan and Jenny Scott were the first Women's team (1,020 points), and Belinda Allison and Susie Hogg were the winning Junior team with 480 points.

## VICTORIA

**An Uncommon Honour.** In April, the search and rescue section of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs received from the Victoria Police a Chief Commissioner's Certificate for outstanding service to the community—an honour seldom accorded to those outside the police force. The *VicWalk Newsletter* reported that, at the presentation, Chief Commissioner Kel Glare commended the section for its assistance to the police during 40 years of search and rescue operations, and emphasized the need for sponsorship to augment federation funds.

**Tom Kneen Track.** The *VicWalk Newsletter* also reported in April that the Place Names Committee had assigned the name Tom Kneen Track to the track on the North-west Spur of Mt Feathertop. The FVWC had been attempting to have Tom Kneen's name permanently associated with Mt Feathertop since shortly after his death there in August 1985 when a cornice collapsed from the summit ridge (see Information, *Wild* no 19).

**Delayed Gratification.** In *Wild* no 35 we published two photographs of competitors in the cross country run section of the 1989 Subaru-Peregrine Winter Classic, up to their armpits in swirling water. Contrary to our standard procedure, these photos were uncredited—not because we harboured a grudge against the photographer, but because we couldn't work out who he or she was! A bulky packet of slides had arrived at our office accompanied only by an initialled, handwritten note, which offered the slides for our use and announced that the photographer was 'off up north' for a holiday. For months we heard no more. The 129 photos sat in our files with a cheque for the use of two of them, made out to no one, until a recent phone call revealed the identity of the phantom photographer. He was Barry White, of Fitzroy, Victoria—now returning from his holiday. Thanks, Barry. The cheque is *finally* in the mail.

The 1990 Classic was held during the last weekend in July near Ormeo, north-eastern Victoria.

**More Madness.** The renowned (and renamed) Murray Ultra Marathon for 1990 will take place on 27-31 December on the Murray River between Yarrawonga and Swan Hill. To gain an idea of what this five-day canoe event involves, see Information in *Wild* no 36. Entry forms are available from the Red Cross, City Rd, South Melbourne, Vic 3205; or contact Glenn Lawless—(03) 616 9999. Entries close 30 November.

**Washed Out.** An item in *Wild* no 37 suggested that casual showers were no longer available at camping grounds and caravan parks around Halls Gap in the Grampians. It now appears that some operators will allow casual visitors to shower, at a price. We suggest you make your own enquiries.

## TASMANIA

**Niggling Away.** The surveying of Niggly Cave has filled in another conspicuous blank section on the maps of the June-June-Florentine cave system. Niggly was discovered in November 1989 by Nick Hume and Leigh Douglas, and explored for 350 metres of horizontal entrance series, which ended in a large shaft. Hume descended this 85 metre pitch in March this year, and reported that the cave continued downwards. In a 12-hour trip during April, leading pioneers, Stefan and Rolan Eberhard rigged the numerous remaining pitches—including one of 103 metres—to the bottom. The cave was subsequently surveyed to a depth of 372 metres, which makes it the third deepest in Australia after Anne-a-Kanada (373 metres) and Ice Tube-Growing Swallet (375 metres). At the bottom of Niggly Cave is a large stream passage known as Feeding the Rat, which is choked at either end with rockfall. When the survey was plotted up, this section proved to be just downstream from the furthest known extent of Growling Swallet; it thus occupies part of what was hitherto *terra incognita* between Growling Swallet and June Resurgence.

Stephen Buntun

**Rescues in Spate.** During 1989 the Tasmanian Police Search and Rescue Squad decided to improve its vertical rope-work and cave rescue skills. This proved timely when, in April this year, three experienced cavers were trapped in Growling Swallet by flood waters. The three sat out the flood for 14 hours before they were reached by a rescue party—also cavers—who entered through Slaughterhouse Pot and escorted them from the cave suffering from mild hypothermia after a 24-hour adventure. Police provided back-up for the operation.

Rescuers were called out again in June when a group of cavers lost the overgrown track while returning from Three-forty-one. The group reached the roadhead as rescuers were about to leave Hobart, and the operation was fortunately averted.

The outcome of another call-out, a week later on 2 July, was less happy. A group of three teachers and eight students from Taroona High School encountered flood waters as they attempted to leave Mystery



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FIGURE 8



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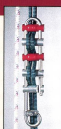


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Creek Cave. The party formed a human chain across the fast-flowing stream, but the chain broke and one student was swept away. A second student was swept away while trying to assist the first. Two teachers then went to their assistance. Rescuers were called out that night, and brought one teacher and six students from the cave in two groups. They had sat out the flood on opposite sides of the swollen river. The following morning a second teacher was escorted from the cave. By midday, rescuers had located the bodies of the two missing students and one teacher. The three unfortunate deaths were Australia's first cave fatalities (although there had been two earlier asphyxiation accidents in the entrances to caves at Bungonia, New South Wales).

The Mystery Creek Cave rescue involved both cavers and members of the police rescue squad. That it proceeded smoothly reflects well on the preparedness of both groups and on the close communication between them. The Minister for Education and the Arts, Peter Patmore, subsequently announced an inquiry into the tragedy and banned caving activities by schools while this was in progress. He stated that caving guidelines for teachers would be reviewed. It is the opinion of local cavers that caving is a legitimate part of outdoor education for school children and that a permanent ban would be an inappropriate solution to the problems posed by the incident. Cavers also believe that tighter guidelines and the certification of teachers would create an unwieldy bureaucratic process—and might not necessarily prevent the occurrence of a disaster similar to that in Mystery Creek Cave.

SB

**Fun for Old Foxes.** The east coast town of St Helens will host the Veterans World Cup orienteering championship on 5–11 January 1992. Approximately 2,000 competitors from Australia and abroad are expected to take part. To qualify as a veteran one must be aged over 35; courses will also be set for less venerable individuals. For more information phone (003) 26 6400.

**Seeing Green.** Examples of the cool temperate rain forests of Tasmania are to be made accessible in a manner similar to that employed at Port Macquarie, NSW, and described in *Information*, Wild no 34. From December, six sites, most of them in the north-west of the State, will sport walking tracks, visitor platforms, and facilities to aid 'interpretation' of the forests. Both State and Federal Governments will provide funds for the project through the Rain Forest Conservation Programme.

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Happy Anniversary.** Most present-day bushwalks appear trivial beside the historic journey of Edward John Eyre across the Australian desert. Eyre's party of five set off from Fowlers Bay, South Australia, in February 1841; five months later, only Eyre himself and an Aboriginal companion named Wylie reached Albany, Western Australia. The sesquicentenary of their 1,400 kilometre journey, which was accomplished mostly on foot, will be celebrated next year in a series of

## Wild Information

events organized by the Royal Western Australian Historical Society. These will include the day-by-day retracing of the entire journey using Eyre's diary as a guide. Ceremonies will be held at important points along the way, including the memorial to Baxter (*No relation!* Editor.), an overseer who was murdered during the journey. For more details, contact the RWAHS—(09) 386 3841.

### OVERSEAS

**Portable Generator.** The use of rechargeable nickel-cadmium batteries minimizes both the cost and the environmental impact of running battery-powered appliances. However, the popularity of rechargeables amongst visitors to remote areas has always been limited by the difficulty of recharging when away from sources of mains power for long periods.

An article published last year in *Sunworld*, the magazine of the International Solar Energy Society, describes the development of a compact, lightweight, solar-powered battery charger. The unit was used on an 18-day Himalayan trek to charge 18 AA batteries, which powered two torches and one headlamp, a shaver, a short-wave radio, an automatic camera and a photographic flash. It charged four cells at a time and was small enough to be mounted either on the outside of a rucksack or on top of a bum bag housing camera equipment.

The author of the article and originator of the unit is Mr J C Larue, PO Box 76, 2200 AB Noordwijk, The Netherlands.

**Mountain Marathons.** New Zealand, home to the Xerox Challenge mentioned in *Information*, Wild no 37, will host two more events for the hard person during the next few months. Entrants in the Mountains to the Sea event will by various means traverse 287 kilometres of the North Island on 20–22 October; entries closed months ago. The Speight's Coast to Coast mountain race—from Kumara Beach on the west coast to Sumner, near Christchurch on the east coast, on foot, in kayaks and on bicycles—will take place on 8–9 February 1991. In addition to the usual two-day event, a one-day championship will be contested over an almost identical course. International competitors have until 31 December to enter. Race Director is Robin Judkins, 56 Clifton Tce, Christchurch 8, New Zealand.

**SkiIn! Flicks?** The 15th annual Banff Festival of Mountain Films will be held on 2–4 November at Banff in the Rocky Mountains of Canada. For information, contact festival director, Bernadette McDonald, at the Banff Centre, Box 1020, Banff, Alberta, Canada.

**Double Trouble.** Oops! Belated apologies to Nick Craddock, whose article in *Wild* no 29, 'Not Another 8,000 Metre Peak', we credited throughout to Nick Craddock. The article told of his ascent with fellow New Zealander, Russell Braddock—the first Australasian ascent—of the spectacular Patagonian peak, Cerro Torre...or is that Cero Torre?

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181.

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# Wilderness— What's That?

State seeks to preserve a dwindling resource

**Special Investigation.** Commentators in the conservation movement and in sections of the media have at times questioned the seriousness of the Victorian Government's commitment to its State Conservation Strategy. It was reported on ABC radio earlier in the year that a change in the definition of 'rain forest' accepted by the Department of Conservation and Environment had led to an increase in the proportion of the State's forests available for logging. Large areas of what would be rain forest according to one definition, and hence in theory would be protected by the strategy, are now called something else and can be logged.

Conservationists are hoping the government will adopt a less equivocal position on another matter contained in the strategy—the preservation of remaining areas of high wilderness quality. The government directed the Land Conservation Council to investigate wilderness in Victoria and to make recommendations on its identification, reservation and uses, and in February the LCC released a descriptive report—the first fruit of its investigations. Responses were invited, to assist in the preparation of proposed recommendations. *Wild* made a written submission, which read in part:

*Wild supports participation in the rucksack sports in a wild environment, and asserts that such participation is not only compatible with the preservation of wilderness values, but is enjoyed to the fullest when combined with an active concern for those values.*

*The paramount consideration in managing a wilderness area, however, should be the protection of the natural environment. All the benefits to be derived from its existence depend on this.*

The submission put a case for the preservation of wilderness based on its intrinsic value and importance as an emotional and social resource; we listed forms of use compatible and incompatible, in our view, with the notion of wilderness; and called for the setting aside of areas of wilderness, identified in the LCC's initial report, in the Victorian Alps, East Gippsland, the Mallee, Wilsons Promontory and the Grampians.

The results of the LCC's further deliberations will be awaited with intense interest, as will the response of the State Government to the committee's recommendations, whatever they may be. Meanwhile, conservation organizations will be attempting to keep the matter in the public gaze, as the following report makes clear.

**Last Chance for Wilderness.** The LCC's Special Investigation acknowledges at last the crisis facing Victoria's remaining wilderness. The study, a State Government initiative, has



**Above,** many argue that Victoria's Baw Baw Plateau is no longer wilderness. Dave Bulman

triggered off a major campaign by four key conservation groups.

The Wilderness Society, Victorian National Parks Association, East Gippsland Coalition and Australian Conservation Foundation have jointly proposed that 36 sites in Victoria be protected and managed as wilderness in order to maintain and enhance their special

qualities. These comprise 21 wilderness areas (of about 25,000 hectares or greater) and 15 primitive areas (most of them smaller than 25,000 hectares). Land of highest wilderness quality is found in the Mallee, the Alps, East Gippsland, the Grampians and Wilsons Promontory.

Very little attention has been given to the fact that, in 150 years of European settlement, more than 90% of the State's original wilderness has been lost. The processes of



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the next 18 months represent the last real chance we will ever have to decide in favour of protecting what remains. If the government and the people of Victoria are seriously committed to the protection of wild places, then they must ensure that this opportunity to put in place proper legislative protection is not missed.

It is crucial that people who support the campaign speak up—write letters to key politicians and to city, suburban and country newspapers. For more information, please contact Georgia Stewart at the Wilderness Society—(03) 670 5229—or come to a meeting of our wilderness action group, held at 6.30 pm every Wednesday at 59 Hardware St, Melbourne.

Georgia Stewart

**Trees to Breathe Easier?** Pressure from environmental organizations has helped galvanize newsprint manufacturers and newspaper and magazine publishers into acting to ensure the continuation of paper collection and recycling schemes. At the end of April, Australian Newsprint Mills (the country's only maker of newsprint) announced its intention to build a de-inking and recycling plant at Albury, on the New South Wales-Victorian border; this will process 130,000 tonnes a year of waste paper. Newspaper publishers subsequently announced the establishment of an industry fund, to which they will contribute around \$2 million a year for at least two years, in order to maintain and improve existing services until the new plant can begin operations. The Australian Conservation Foundation had proposed a boycott on the purchase of daily papers in an attempt to extract a commitment from publishers as to the future of newsprint recycling, but welcomed the industry's move by abandoning that tactic.

**Koalas.** Their gross nocturnal grunting may on occasions have disturbed your sleep and prompted reflections on the thinness of tent walls, but we're sure you'd hate to lose them. Koalas are in trouble, principally as a result of the fragmentation and destruction of their habitat. A 'koala summit conference' held in Sydney in late 1988 heard many papers which indicated that, without changes to the management of koala populations and habitat, the species would eventually disappear from the wild in New South Wales. The proceedings of that conference have been published as a book, *Koala Summit: Managing Koalas in New South Wales* is available from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, PO Box 1967, Hurstville, NSW 2220, for \$19.95 including postage.

The Australian Koala Foundation is an organization based in Brisbane which actively promotes 'koala rights' around Australia and abroad. Their address is Gum Tree House, 40 Charlotte St, Brisbane, QLD 4000.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

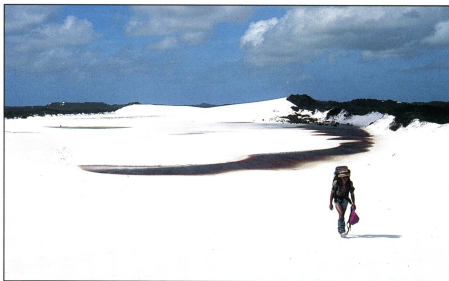
**Kakadu Count-down.** The 12 months set aside for assessing the pros and cons of allowing mining in the Conservation Zone around Coronation Hill, within Stage Three of Kakadu National Park, are passing. The

inquiry of the Resources Assessment Commission into the matter is well under way. As the time for a decision draws closer, environmentalists, scientists and representatives of indigenous populations from many countries have petitioned the Prime Minister and the Australian Government and people to ensure protection for the 'sickness country' sacred to the indigenous Jawoyn people; for the catchment of the South

an EIS on the harvesting of lancewood and gutta percha in the territory be prepared and made available for public comment.

## QUEENSLAND

**Troubled Waters.** The disclosure in the *Age* during July that Federal Minister for Resources, Alan Griffiths, had extended an invitation to petroleum companies to explore



**Above,** Shelburne Bay dunes, Cape York, Queensland. Cape York is the site for a proposed spaceport and a separate \$400 million tourist and residential development. Ian Brown

Alligator River; and for the entire Kakadu region. In separate petitions, participants in the Wild 1990 conference on wilderness (held in Hawaii) and Environment Link 1990, an Australia-wide tour by environmentalists from South-east Asia and the Pacific region, called for the inclusion of the proposed mine site in the National Park and its nomination for addition to the existing World Heritage Area. The submission made by the latter group said, in part, that mining at Coronation Hill would constitute 'a clear message to the world that this country believes that no land is too important to mine'.

**Splintering Lances.** A report in the July issue of *Conservation News*, the newsletter of the Australian Conservation Foundation, identified an emerging, specialized forestry industry in the NT as presenting a threat to two species of small tree, one of which, it is thought, is an important habitat species for the rare spectacled hare wallaby. Lancewood and gutta percha appear set to be harvested to provide wood for fine veneers, spindles and shuttles used by the overseas spinning industry. Details of the extent and nature of planned logging operations and of the biology of the two species are in short supply, and no environmental impact statement has been prepared. The Environment Centre (NT) requests that readers write to the NT Minister for Conservation, Steve Hatton, GPO Box 3146, Darwin, NT 0801, and Federal Minister for Resources, Alan Griffiths, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2601, and request that

for oil and gas near the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park brought an angry response from conservationists, other ministers, and the tourism industry. Many were apparently annoyed as much by the lack of consultation—with other departments, the Queensland Government, or the Marine Park Authority—that preceded the announcement as with its content. Within a couple of days, Prime Minister Bob Hawke met with Alan Griffiths and Minister for the Environment, Ros Kelly, and issued a guarantee that no exploration would take place that would 'in any way endanger' the reef. Both ministers endorsed this position.

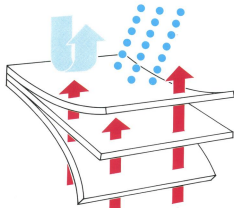
**Cape York.** An article in *Conservation News* for July reaffirmed the seriousness of the threat to the environment and to Aboriginal culture posed by developments planned for Queensland's far north. The proposed spaceport at Temple Bay (see Green Pages, Wild no 35) has received continued support in the media from government members including Federal Minister for Industry and Commerce, Senator John Button. According to the article, it is expected that the spaceport alone would attract at least half a million tourists to the area each year. Further south is Lloyd Bay, apparently the site proposed for a \$400 million tourist and residential complex. The Aboriginal community at nearby Lockhart River, with a population of approximately 450, faces the prospect of inundation by visitors and encroachment on its sacred places. The community council has appealed to the High Court against rezoning of the land at Lloyd Bay for tourism.

Other pressures on the cape include mining for gold and bauxite; plans for sand mining and

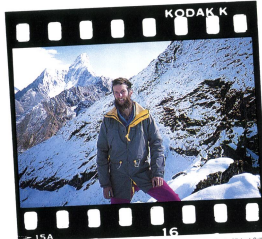
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Michael Colles wearing Peppy Palin Vortex jacket in Khumbu region. Photo: Michael Colles collection

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Mountain Designs Shulaw jacket, Keweenaw 1989. Photo: M. Boudier

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J&H Corcoran jacket, Lisa Nicholas Telemark skiing, Verber. Photo: Mark Shapiro

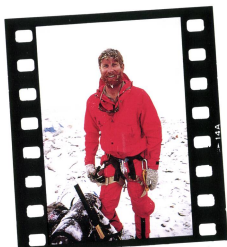
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**garments?** Of course, just as we can when wearing a T-shirt or nothing at all. The hotter we get, the more we perspire. However, whenever you need weatherproof protection you'll be drier inside a 'breathing' Gore-Tex fabric garment.



Walter Lane wearing Wilderness Equipment suit, Camp 1 (5480 m) after summit attempt on Everest. Photo: Will Steffen

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# GORE-TEX FABRICS DO MORE

for an alumina refinery near Weipa; grazing and the associated use of fertilizers and pesticides; commercial fishing; and recreation. In his track notes to Cape York on page 59 of this issue, Ian Brown makes a case for low-impact recreation in the area.

**FIFI.** The Fraser Island Fitzgerald Inquiry is under way. Commissioner Tony Fitzgerald QC will attempt to assess the conservation value of the island and its forests of satinay and brush box. In a submission to the inquiry, Queensland environment groups called for a restriction on the size of trees which could be logged, for logging to be limited to areas of regrowth, and for clear-felling and regeneration burning to stop. Meanwhile, according to a report in the May issue of *Conservation News*, logging is to continue on the island.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

**Forests Study Released.** As this issue of *Wild* went to press, Federal ministers, conservationists and the timber industry were shaping up for battle over the findings of a scientific study of the National Estate forests of south-eastern New South Wales (see the article in *Wild* no 36). The study, which was initiated last year as part of an agreement between the NSW and Federal Governments, supports continued logging in the Coolangubra, Tantawangalo and Yowaka National Estate forests and proposes that, at most, 50% of the three areas ought to be preserved. Conservationists argued that wilderness values were ignored by the study group. Of the parties involved, only the NSW Government seemed satisfied with the result.

**Polluters Pay.** The NSW Government enacted legislation in May which established three Environmental Trust Funds to help finance future projects. The trusts will accrue capital from fees charged by the Sydney Water Board to industries discharging pollutants into the sewerage system. Grants will be made from the return on the capital, and will go towards restoration and rehabilitation, research, and environmental education. It is anticipated that industrial waste charges over the next decade will amount to something like \$400 million, eventually allowing grants of about \$40 million a year.

Premier Nick Greiner earned plaudits from the ACF for a statement—*The New Environmentalism: A Conservation Perspective*—released at around the same time as the Environmental Trusts legislation. A report in *Conservation News* described the statement as 'the first serious recognition by the Coalition parties that the environment is indeed a mainstream issue'.

**Snowy Cocktail.** As part of a routine press release in July, the Ministry for the Environment announced that a small amount of diesel fuel had escaped from a holding tank used by contractors in the employ of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in Kosciusko National Park. No details were given of the size, location or cause of the spill; however, the release indicated that it had been contained.

**Minimal Impact Skidooing.** Cross country skiers and conservationists have expressed annoyance at finding skidoo tracks in remote parts of Kosciusko National Park, such as the Kierries. One weekend during the July school holidays—prime time for ski touring—two NPWS rangers were observed using skidoos in order to place notices in some of the park's huts. The object of the notices? The need to tread lightly in the bush—minimal impact bushwalking!

David Noble

Department of Water Resources and the Environment Division of the Ministry for Planning and Environment to give the Department of Conservation and Environment. Got that? Good—but what's next? The Ministry for Ecologically Sustainable Government, perhaps?

**Housekeeping.** Jamie Pittock, Alpine Resorts Campaign Officer for the Victorian National Parks Association, reports that the State Electricity Commission has begun to remove



**Above:** this hut near Pretty Valley on Victoria's Bogong High Plains was removed by the State Electricity Commission during a recent clean-up of the area. Glenn van der Knijff

**Pretty as a Picture...** or lovely as a tree? An unidentified newspaper clipping recently crossed our desk. It commented on an ironic aspect to the purchase of Van Gogh's *Portrait of Doctor Gachet and Renoir's Au Moulin de la Galette*, for a total in excess of \$US211 million, by the billionaire Japanese businessman who owns the paper manufacturer Daishowa. David Nerlich pointed out in *Wild* no 36 that Daishowa extracts 1,000,000 tonnes of woodchips each year from the forests of south-eastern Australia. As the clipping concluded: 'I expect he'd be outraged if someone took a chain-saw to his irreplaceable Van Gogh. But that's what he's doing to our heritage.'

## VICTORIA

**A Feat of the Image-ination?** Is the whole greater than the sum of its parts? First (at least in recent memory) came the Forests Commission of Victoria, the Ministry for Conservation and the Department of Crown Lands and Survey. They (or some of their parts) merged in 1983 to yield the Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands. At the most recent reshuffle of State Government Departments, DCF&L was combined with the

from the Bogong High Plains evidence of its earlier operations there. Ski tourers and walkers may have noted the disappearance of a hut from the Pretty Valley area, near Falls Creek. Rubbish, signs, posts, telephone poles, introduced trees, and other abandoned buildings have also gone. The management of alpine land is not always this sympathetic, as Jamie's article later in this issue reveals.

**Mallee Success.** The Mallee Parks Bill, which will establish large new National Parks and reserves in the north-west of the State, passed through the Upper House late in May. Amendments proposed by the National Party, and designed to allow harvesting of broombush and grazing to continue in the new parks, were rejected by the Labor Government and Liberal Opposition.

**Grampians Burn.** The July issue of the newsletter of the VNPA reported on a fire in the Victoria Range, Grampians National Park. Lit and supervised by local DCE officers as part of a programme of burning (the aim of which is to achieve 'a variation in vegetation ages after burning for the benefit of flora and fauna'), the fire crossed one of its designated boundaries and burned an area of three square kilometres close to a site known to support a population of rock wallabies. The VNPA accepts that fire is an appropriate management tool, but is concerned at the



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damage done by both the escaped fire and the measures needed to extinguish it, and at the size of the main blaze. In the absence of conclusive knowledge of the effects of fire in the Grampians, 25 square kilometres seems a lot.

**Mitchell Dam.** Torrential rains during April caused record floods in Queensland, New

**More Plans.** Another DCE planning team is at work on a proposed management plan for the Baw Baw National Park, about 180 kilometres east of Melbourne. The proposed plan is to be published in February 1991 and exhibited for public comment before preparation of the final plan. More information is available from Jim O'May at the DCE in Melbourne—(03) 412 4011.



**Above,** the Snowy River. Victoria's Department of Conservation and the Environment is preparing a draft management plan for the area. Jonathan Clabourn

South Wales and Victoria. Farmers' organizations subsequently renewed calls for the construction of a dam on Gippsland's Mitchell River. Work began in preparation during the dying days of the last State Liberal Government; a major road was built to the proposed site. On election in 1982, the Cain Government deferred the project indefinitely.

The Mitchell is the last major river in southern mainland Australia to flow free of dams for its entire length. It is a very large river with eight major tributaries. Serious moves to revive the Mitchell Dam project would be sure to spark controversy. See the three-part article on the Mitchell by Brian Walters later in this issue.

**Snowy River.** The 95,400 hectares protected in the Snowy River National Park contain the State's largest forest wilderness and most spectacular river scenery. The deep gorges, white water and rich variety of flora and fauna are highly regarded by bushwalkers and canoeists. It is one of the most popular National Parks in Victoria.

DCE has been holding discussions with user groups and is preparing a draft management plan for the park which is expected to be released for public comment in March 1991. Wilderness lovers should stand by with pen and (recycled) paper to have their say. Meanwhile, further information can be obtained from planning officer Alan Jeffrey, Department of Conservation and Environment, Dowling St, Bendoc, Vic 3888.

Yvonne McLaughlin

## OVERSEAS

**Antarctic Clean-up.** Earlier this year, mountaineers removed approximately 140 kilograms of rubbish from Mt Vinson (4,897 metres), the highest mountain in Antarctica. The clean-up was an attempt to set an example for expeditions that visit Antarctic peaks. It was initiated by Mugs Stump, an American climber and mountain guide employed by a Canadian adventure travel firm which operates the continent's only private flights. The rubbish was flown to Chile for disposal.

Party nations to the Antarctic Treaty will meet in Chile during November to consider the proposal of the Australian and French Governments for a ban on mineral exploration and a convention to provide protection for the Antarctic environment.

**Fishing for Compliments.** The welcome news came during July that Japan intends to stop drift-net fishing in the Tasman and South Pacific this year, one year earlier than planned. It had been expected that 20 Japanese fishing boats equipped with drift nets would venture into the region in the coming season, but operations will now be suspended pending the production of regulations designed to conserve albacore tuna populations. A report in the *Age* attributed the change of heart to Japan's desire to build good relations with South Pacific island nations, whose economies rely in large part on marine resources. South Korea no longer practises drift netting in the region; only Taiwan still operates a fleet there. The report went on to say, however, that about 460 Japanese boats continue to lay drift nets in the North Pacific.

**Tropical Forest Tragedy.** We reported in *Information*, Wild no 33, that the Thai Government had banned logging in Thailand's forests after landslides on denuded slopes killed several hundred people. It appears that the Thai logging consortiums thus deprived of access to their own country's forests are now plundering neighbouring Burma's teak and other timbers. Media reports have quoted environmentalists and United Nations officials who estimate that 500,000 hectares of Burmese forest have been cut down in the last five years.

This massive damage to the environment is accompanied by a huge human cost. For years the Karen, Hmon and other ethnic minorities opposed to the military regime in Rangoon have resisted attempts by the Burmese army to drive them from their fortified bases on the Burmese side of the border, and the Thais have been satisfied to let their neighbours fight amongst themselves. Now, apparently in return for logging concessions on Burmese soil, Thailand has abetted the Burmese military campaign against the insurgents. Their harassment of logging contractors has consequently all but ceased, and teak logs are crossing the border into Thailand on convoys of trucks.

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send contributions to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181.

The draft management plan for the Langi Ghiran State Park, north of the Western Highway between Ararat and Beaufort, can be inspected at DCE offices in Ballarat, Ararat and Stawell. The department will accept written submissions on the draft plan until 30 September.

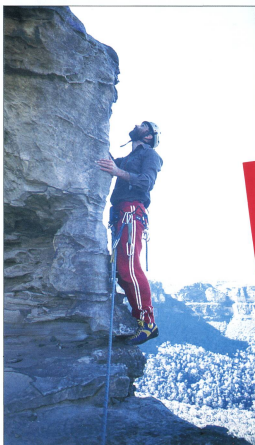
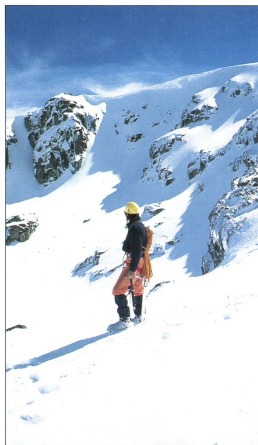
## TASMANIA

**Heritage Management.** The Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage was expected to release its draft plan of management for the State's World Heritage Area in early August, after this issue of *Wild* went to press. The department initially nominated the end of October as the closing date for public comment on the plan. For more information, contact the World Heritage Area planning team at the department, GPO Box 44A, Hobart, Tas 7001.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Open Fire.** The June issue of *Conservation News* reported the release of environmental assessments on two proposals for new coal-fired power stations in the State. One would be located near Collie in the south-west, the other at Mt Lesueur, 250 kilometres north of Perth. The latter site is in an area which supports a huge number of plant and animal species and was first recommended for protection as a National Park in 1974. The ACF opposes both the choice of sites and the 'dirty' nature of the technology proposed, and suggests that readers write to the Premier, Carmen Lawrence, c/- Capita Centre, 197 St Georges Tce, Perth, WA 6000, expressing their views.

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# An Alpine Approach to Bushwalking

Stephen Bunton advocates packing up your troubles—and leaving them at home



▲ PEOPLE GO BUSHWALKING FOR A VARIETY of reasons. Some just like to get away from it all; others go for the scenery; some, to fill in their spare time; and yet others, to photograph the bush. I like bushwalking for all these reasons but, in addition, each walk has a particular objective—a goal to be achieved. To this end I have changed my attitude to bushwalking over the years and have refined the gear I carry until it weighs very little. This allows me to move faster and therefore travel further afield in any given period of time.

Such a manner of achieving an objective has long been an integral part of alpine climbing but is not much favoured among bushwalkers, who in general prefer what I call 'percentage walking'; they carry an extra few days' food and attempt to gain their objective by sieging it in traditional or expedition style. The maxim of alpine climbing is 'speed is safety'; for bushwalking—at least in Tasmania—I believe 'speed is comfort'. Any walk is more enjoyable if it can be timed to coincide with good weather and accomplished with a light pack.

I once recommended this theory to a fellow walker while we were battered down, waiting for the spell of good weather which we hoped would begin the following day. He replied that he had done likewise. I didn't have the heart to tell him that I never carry a duvet, running

shoes, an entire cutlery set nor one of those million-billy cookers complete with a teapot. In my opinion he hadn't really gone into it thoroughly.

The conversation was triggered by his simple question: 'How come you guys walk so fast?' The answer is that we don't walk all that fast. We take the bare minimum of gear and food needed, our packs are lighter as a result, and we inevitably travel faster than someone struggling under a huge load. We don't wear ourselves out under a heavy burden and therefore stop less frequently and for shorter periods. The sacrifice of a few creature comforts leads to an overall increase in speed. There must be an exponential equation that predicts the increase in time spent on a bushwalk for a given increase in load.

This approach does less damage to me and also to the environment. I am in the wilds for less time yet achieve more, and I 'walk softly' by virtue of my light pack. The ultimate in minimal impact bushwalking is to be in the bush for the shortest time possible; with the exception of proliferating tracks, the problems associated with overnight camping pose the most significant threat to the environment.

Since that trip I've thought further about my style of bushwalking and the food and equipment I take. This exercise has yielded a list of (I hope) helpful hints for fellow walkers.

**Above, going light.** (We trust it's light reading he's indulging in.) David Noble

The list is modelled on advice given by Yvon Chouinard in his classic alpine climbing textbook *Climbing Ice*—advice I have found most useful in my alpine climbing career.

**Preparedness.** 1 Be flexible with regard to dates. Don't start a trip on a certain day simply because that was the predetermined date. Be prepared, as far as possible, to go at any time. If the weather is poor but improving, wait until the next day. Don't be afraid to cancel a trip—surely you've better things to do with your time than slog around in the rain and mud all day and then spend the night in a wet tent.

2 If, however, the first day of a walk is only an approach march, then you can do it regardless of filthy conditions in the hope that the weather will improve when you are amongst the good scenery.

3 Learn to read weather maps. Use recorded telephone meteorological services.

4 Have your weekend bushwalking gear at the ready until the right weekend comes along. Then all you need to do is buy your food and go.

5 Plan to attempt renowned mud bashes such as the sodden Loddon and Arthur Plains only after dry spells.

**Weight Reduction.** 'Going Light' by Syd Boydeli (see *Wild* no 24) is an excellent article





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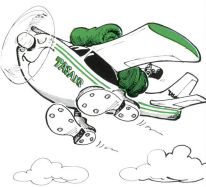
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which details the rationale behind the selection and packing of food and gear for a trip. Additional to this are some other weight-reduction measures which many people overlook. The notion that 'it's only a little bit of extra weight' ignores the fact that, unfortunately, all those extras add up!

1 Photostat the relevant pages of the guidebook or memorize the route description, and leave the book at home. Trace the route on to your map or draw a sketch map on typing paper. Take one map per group—you won't lose it.

2 Leave the 'ten essentials' at home. People carry metres of string, wire, heliographs, flares, candle holders, sewing kits and so on. Forget them. Any spares you haven't needed on the last few walks can safely be left at home. Take only the gear and clothes safety dictates—including a first aid kit.

3 On trips to the mountains or in cool climates you should definitely take your raincoat, overpants, jumper, thermals, warm hat and gloves; but always think about their weight-efficiency. One pair of thermals is sufficient since they dry so quickly. If you are really wet and cold you can usually crawl into a sleeping bag, so there is no need for a spare change of clothing. In cold climates, don't take cotton. When wet, it is thermally inefficient and weighs a tonne. Synthetic insulators such as Fibrefill and Polarfleece are lighter than wool; mohair is less bulky than either. Darnat gloves are better than wool mitts and in winter it's worth taking two pairs.

4 Take a lighter sleeping bag. You can sleep in your thermals if it's really cold. Make sure your sleeping bag stays dry, though—it's your ultimate life-support system.

5 Forget the toilet trowel; snow pegs work fine, and you may need them for boggy campsites anyway. When selecting a tent, choose one that requires only a small number of pegs and poles. Leave additional guy ropes behind—how often have you needed them?

6 Trim spare tapes from your rucksack. The modern pack is infinitely adjustable, but usually only one person wears it—you. Adjustable designs allow manufacturers to make just one or two sizes and shop assistants to make sure they fit everybody. We pay for this 'convenience' in extra cost of manufacture and shop assistants' time, and in the weight we carry around. Once the pack is set to your body trim off all excess tapes. Get rid of sternum straps and manufacturers' labels. The latter goes for clothing, too—you're not a walking advertisement.

7 Don't be afraid to modify your gear for increased efficiency. I haven't got a single piece of gear that I haven't altered in some way—by trimming things from it or adding features to it. Manufacturers don't necessarily make what you want. Be an individual; tailor equipment to your own needs.

8 Learn to run a sewing machine. Make your own gear if you can. The two considerations that you should try to maximize are ease of use (and hence speed) and weight-reduction. I regard speed as the overriding consideration and therefore, for example, carry cord grips on my stuff sacks. The little extra weight is compensated for by the speed and efficiency they give me. This is

especially important in cold conditions, when fingers are numb. The time you spend trying to pitch and get into a tent may be critical one day. Making your own gear to suit specific needs saves money, too.

9 Carry only one car key, not the whole bunch.

10 Don't be afraid to take food for less than the number of days the guidebook recommends. With lighter packs you'll be able to travel faster and won't need the extra food.

**Travel.** 1 Calculate in advance your speed in relation to 'guidebook hours'. If you know you can walk a four- to six-hour leg in four hours, then you can plan to do one in the morning and one in the afternoon. This will probably mean you'll complete two days' walk in just one.

2 Adopt a pace you can maintain all day. Stop for no more rests than necessary, and make them short. Photo stops are an appropriate time to rest. You won't get great photos just taking 'happy snaps' but, for the purpose of this article, photography is not your main objective.

3 Keep yourself suitably fit. This will increase your enjoyment manifold and help you to achieve your objectives.

4 Learn to free climb; it will help you when scrambling on rocky ground. The fewer times you need to haul or pass packs, the faster you can travel.

5 Don't stop for lunch. Have your lunch and munch food in a 'nose bag' so that you can easily grab it at rest stops and nibble.

**Food.** 1 Live on cheese, salami and cracker biscuits. They are excellent sources of energy per gram.

2 Drink regularly to avoid dehydration. If your schedule is strenuous and you don't get the kilojoules you need, you will burn body fat—and this requires extra water. On the subject of fluids—leave your cup behind and drink out of a bowl.

3 Don't trim the handle off your toothbrush; leave it behind and eat an apple instead.

Whilst these measures may seem trivial and the benefit of each one minimal, the cumulative effect can be a significant increase in comfort and speed.

Whether or not you decide to adopt these measures depends upon your set of values. There seems to me to be little point carrying food for eight days on what is in fact a four-day walk. Percentage walking doesn't necessarily increase your chances of success. In the bush I am happy to live austere for a few days rather than struggle for longer beneath a huge pack. If you want all the comforts of home, stay home. Rest assured that as soon as I've achieved my objective I'll be the first one heading for a hot shower and a cold beer. In modern parlance you might say I am slightly schizophrenic, enduring hardship in the bush and luxuriating at home, but in more antiquated terminology it's just a question of balance, of Yin and Yang.

In the end I guess the percentage approach—having an each-way bet, packing up my troubles in the old kit bag and then taking them with me—is just not my style. ▲

Stephen Burton (see Contributors in Wild no 6) is Wild's Contributing Editor for carving. An experienced walker and climber, he has visited many parts of Australia and several overseas countries to pursue these interests.

# T H E MITCHELL R I V E R

An account by *Brian Walters* of Victoria's last major undammed river, including extracts from the diary of Alfred Howitt, and track notes for bushwalkers

## THE RIVER TODAY

### A brief outline

▲ ON 18 JANUARY 1840, A 30-YEAR-OLD Scotsman, exploring south from Monaro towards the country around Bass Strait, came to a 'large river'. It was too wide for his party to cross, and they travelled some way upstream before a ford was found.

The Scotsman, Angus McMillan, wrote that the region was 'the most delightful country I ever beheld'. He named the river the Mitchell, after the Surveyor-General of New South Wales, Sir Thomas Mitchell. This was the same Major Mitchell who explored much of central and western Victoria, including the Grampians.

Long before McMillan came, the region was roamed by the Kurnai tribe. The tribe was divided into five clans, and since time out of mind the domain of the Brabiralung clan had included the entire watershed of the Mitchell valley. Their more poetic name for the Mitchell was



*Right, the Amphitheatre, Mitchell River. Far right, a hot walker contemplates the river far below. Ted Endacott*



the Warrangarra, but it appears they had little need to frequent the Mitchell River Gorge country upstream from the wide Gippsland flats.

The Mitchell River is the only major river in southern mainland Australia not dammed anywhere along its length. Officially, the Mitchell is formed by the confluence of the Wonnangatta and Dargo Rivers, but several other rivers also contribute to its flow.

The wild Wonnangatta rises in the Terrible Hollow below Mt Howitt and is joined by the Humffray and Moroka Rivers. The Wonnangatta is fed by the Crooked River before joining the Wonnangatta. The Dargo chuckles all the way from Mt Hotham, picking up the Little Dargo on the way. When it meets the Wonnangatta, the Mitchell starts its journey to the Gippsland Lakes. One more river, the Wentworth, further swells the Mitchell near Tabberabbera as the latter is about to enter its gorge.

The vegetation beside the Mitchell River is always a surprise. Along the

lower reaches of the river, deep and quiet, giant kanooka trees grow out of the water and hang above their reflections. Here and there is a tangle of creepers, and ferns sprout in profusion. The gullies support pittosporums, lillypills and yellow-wood. The trunks and branches are covered by ferns, mosses and orchids. These are remnants of warm temperate rain forest, kin to the rain forest found in places near the east coast of New South Wales. The Mitchell valley marks the south-western extremity for this type of vegetation. The dry eucalypt and acacia forest up on the ridges overlooking the river seems a world apart.

The gorges and gullies which feed the Mitchell River have a charm of their own. Bull Creek winds through a square-walled gorge where ferns and vines drape the cliffs. Pools of water along its bed nourish tree-ferns. One could imagine a lost Amazonian city here, its walls encroached upon by the luxuriant jungle.

By contrast, Stony Creek, only a few kilometres downstream, has a wide, sunlit gorge. Its rocky floor is bare of vegetation in many places apart from occasional slender eucalypts. The red cliffs and sparse vegetation could be in central Australia.

Half-way down the Mitchell Gorge is its most spectacular feature, a large semi-circle of cliffs called the Amphitheatre. Boulders from these cliffs have tumbled down to form the 300 metre long Washing Machine Rapid. In late winter the unchecked snow melt makes the river here a wild, threshing serpent which has bitten many a paddler.

The cliffs along the Amphitheatre are high and are used by climbers but, as with most cliffs in East Gippsland, the rock is unstable. There is a large archway in the cliffs, down which the intrepid walker can scramble with care. Beware of loose rocks.

People have long wanted to dam the Mitchell. Work on a weir to provide irrigation for farmers on the Mitchell

## The Mitchell River Walking Track

### Track notes for bushwalkers

▲ GOLD WAS EXTRACTED ALONG THE MITCHELL River Gorge intermittently from the late 1870s until this century, and during that time a bridle path was constructed to enable supplies to be sent packed on horseback to the miners who worked along the river. The miners have long gone and the bush has quietly grown back, but the bridle path is still there. It forms one of Victoria's most pleasant summer walks, extending from Anguskvale to the Den of Nargun.

For this walk a car shuttle is necessary, with one car placed at the car-park at the Den of Nargun (at the end of Waller Road).

**The walk.** Take the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission Road which heads east from the Dargo Road ten kilometres north of Waller Road. Follow this road generally east down to the Mitchell River at the wide river flats where the town of Anguskvale once stood. From here follow the smaller road beside the river downstream to a point where the 'road' swings away from the river and a foot track begins. This is the Mitchell River Walking Track, and the wide pool in the river here is drained by Slalom Rapid. Note that camping is not permitted in the area of the start of the walk near Slalom Rapid, but there is ample space for camping at nearby Anguskvale.

The start of the walk is signposted, and following the bridle path should present few navigational difficulties. It will be seen from the map that in places the walking track joins a four-wheel-drive track and then leaves it again. At these points it is signposted, but be sure to keep as close to the river as possible.

At the Amphitheatre look-out, take care to follow the foot track which leads downhill and more to the east rather than the wide track leading to a rough four-wheel-drive road which climbs away from the river.

For much of its length, the bridle path follows the side of the river valley and only rarely drops to river level. For this reason, it is wise to carry water.

There are any number of opportunities to go down to the river where the good campsites are, but this will require exploration and imagination on your part. Some particularly good campsites are as follows:

**Jurgenson Point,** a long tongue of land, round which the river winds. At its tip there is a wide, treed, grassy area. Unfortunately a belt of blackberries separates you from the river, but there are numerous paths through this to a sandy beach and an excellent swimming hole.

**The Amphitheatre.** If you are a nimble climber you can camp beside the Washing Machine Rapid at the upstream end of the Amphitheatre. There is an outstanding campsite beside a wide pool just before the river tumbles down the rapid. In summer this rapid offers excellent natural spa baths. Alternatively, a kilometre downstream at the lower end of the Amphitheatre is a wide sandy area suitable for camping, immediately below the rock archway in the cliffs.

**Between the Amphitheatre and Bull Creek** the track stays high for some distance, but at length drops to the river's edge. Here you can swim the river to camp on the sandy beach opposite (the river is deep) or continue a few hundred metres to a point where the track leads sharply away from the river. Head directly down to the river from here to an excellent campsite.

There are also camping facilities provided between Bull Creek and Woolshed Creek near the end of the walk.

This walk is best undertaken in early summer, when the wildflowers are out and it is warm enough to swim in the river, but is rewarding at almost any time of year. For those who simply want to traverse the bridle path, an energetic day will suffice. Most people, however, will want to savour the bush in the area and explore the approaches to the river. It is better to allow three days. Even then you will not see it all. ▲

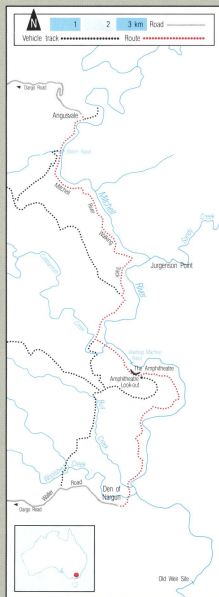




River flats began at Stony Creek as far back as 1890. Disputes arose about the dam's effectiveness, and over funding. The government withdrew its support. Then, when still incomplete, the dam was damaged by flood waters, and work ceased. Today the unfinished weir is still there, its lichen-covered ramparts rising out of the river like the breached walls of a ruined castle.

A large road now reaches through the bush to the site of the river at Angusvale, the site of an old gold-mining town. The building of the road was a major engineering effort and took place during the dying days of the Hamer Government. It was to be the first stage in the construction of a proposed dam on the Mitchell River. On its election in 1982, the new Labor Government decided to 'defer indefinitely' the construction of the Mitchell River dam. The new National Park still excludes the proposed dam site, however, and it is not certain whether the Mitchell will finally be saved or dammed. ▲

## Mitchell River



# BARK FANTASTICS

## The first canoe trip down the Mitchell Gorge

▲ SURVEY THE HISTORY OF GIPPSLAND in the nineteenth century and you will inevitably be confronted by the towering personality of Alfred Howitt. A relentless explorer, he led a government expedition into the Mitchell headwaters in 1860 in search of gold. Promising gold-fields were found, especially along the Crooked River (which Howitt named in sheer frustration as he tried to follow it upstream).

Howitt returned to Gippsland after leading the expedition sent to relieve Burke and Wills. He was appointed a magistrate and was the local representative of the government board for the protection of Aborigines. He became an expert on Aboriginal culture and languages, and published at least ten works on the subject. He built a homestead on the eastern side of the Mitchell River, overlooking Bainsdale, on a site now called Howitt Park. The house was demolished in the 1950s.

Howitt was always tramping, riding, exploring. He tried to find Tali Karng, having been told of the hidden lake's existence by Aborigines who had first discovered it in living memory. He reached the lake on his second attempt, but not before a white grazier, Dick Riggall, had been directed there by an Aboriginal stockman. The mountain from which the watersheds of the Macalister, Goulburn and Mitchell Rivers begin is named Mt Howitt in his honour.

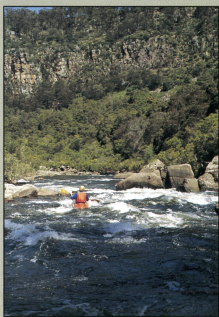
By 1875 Howitt had been in Gippsland for 15 years, but the Mitchell Gorge from Tabberabbera down to Lindenow flats still defied him. As he wrote:

*The most interesting features...are ...to be observed among the grand natural sections of the valley of the Mitchell River, below Tabberabbera... All throughout its course, until it flows into the open country of the marine tertiary, the river is flanked on one side or the other by cliffs, or by successive cliffs above each other on the forest-covered hills. So inaccessible is this deep valley that it forms an almost complete barrier...A few isolated miners searching for gold, or a solitary stockkeeper looking for strayed cattle or horses, are the only human beings who ever descend from the hills into the solitudes of the valley. Even the aboriginal blacks themselves, when I enquired from them, seemed to know little of it.*

A man like Howitt could not ignore such a challenge.

*This river valley afforded tempting promise of a rich harvest of geological facts, and I determined to examine it...by means of a boat. I consulted a number of my aboriginal acquaintances who were then camped at Bainsdale. None of them knew the river, but, after a long consultation, it was decided that the attempt could be made.*

The trip required two bark canoes, one to carry Howitt, and the other, the few things required. Two Aborigines, named Turnmile ('One who swaggers') and Bungil Bottle ('He of the bottle' because of an extraordinary capacity of absorption of strong waters'), undertook to navigate the canoes.



Above, beginning the long rapid in the Amphitheatre. Endacott. Right, another mode of travel near the same place. Brian Walters collection

This was almost certainly the first canoe trip down the Mitchell Gorge, and in no 'plastic fantasies'.

*The canoes were no great triumph of naval architecture, and not even good as canoes, having been taken from small, poor trees—the season was bad for the bark to 'strip'. Stepping cautiously from the small ledge on the river bank...into the largest canoe—about eight feet in length—I sat down on a piece of bark which was luxuriously provided for my especial use, with my geological hammer in one hand and my notebook in the other. I felt that I only wanted another pair or two of arms to present a ridiculous parody of Brahmah. Bungil Bottle cautiously stepped in behind, folded himself together in a way suggestive of several extra joints, and we slowly glided away on the calm river.*

The trip was undertaken in early 1875, and the river was low because of the dry season. The canoeists lunched at what



is now called Jurgenson Point. They were able to negotiate their craft through the rapids:

*Carefully putting one leg over the side of the canoe in shallow water they got their footing and lightly stepped out; then, holding the canoe by the pointed stern, they let it cautiously slip over the foaming, rushing water, steering it between the boulders, stopping ever and anon to peer forward for the safest channels and themselves knee-deep, waist-deep, even up to their armpits.*

Late on the first day, Turnmile wrecked his canoe on a submerged rock but saved his cargo. The remaining 'barque' was taken to shore and the party camped.

The following day Bungil Bottle canoed while Turnmile and Howitt walked. In the hot weather they found themselves fighting through dense bush with vines and climbing plants, brambles and nettles. Eventually they reached Dead-cock Creek (now known as Woolshed Creek) and, leaving their canoe 'for the marts' (ghosts), as Bungil Bottle expressed it, they marched out up the creek-bed. Howitt describes what they found:

*A little further on we came to a second cave, a wonderfully picturesque and beautiful spot. As before, a soft bed of reddish shale had been worn away by the backwash of waters falling over a hard ledge, but here the cave was higher and deeper, in front of a pool of water looking black and smooth as glass under the dense shade of the 'Lilly-pillys'. Stalactites fringed the rim of the cavern and hung in pendent*

*rows from its roof. A huge stalactitic mass at one side joined the roof to the floor so as to partly screen the cavern, and on either hand the rocks rose up almost perpendicularly for I think not less than 400-500 feet.*

Two lyre-birds which were disporting themselves in the cavern almost delayed their departure too long. Bungil Bottle narrowly missed one with a lump of wood which he threw as quick as lightning, and Master Turnmile, being very excited, was in the act of throwing my new tomahawk at the other among the rocks when I stopped him. I preferred my new tomahawk to a dead lyre-bird, but my aboriginal seemed not to see it in the same light.

While I made a slight sketch and examined the rocks, the two black fellows looked around the cave with many wondering exclamations of 'Ko-ki' at the stalactites, two of which they carried off as wonderful objects to show their friends...Master Turnmile, 'the dandy', thought it would be a splendid place to run off to with one of the aboriginal young damsels—a house ready provided, plenty of wallabies and native bears, and a country unknown to the other black fellows. Bungil Bottle on his part was impressed vividly by the belief that this was indeed the haunt of the mysterious creature, the 'Nargun', the 'Ngrung' a 'Narguna' ('den of the Nargun').

The Nargun, according to their belief, is a mysterious creature, a cave-dweller, which haunts the

various places of the bush. So far as I could learn, the blacks believe the Nargun haunts especially the Mitchell valley, which we had just followed from Tabberabbera. What is the appearance of a Nargun they cannot describe, excepting that it is like a rock (wallung), it is said to be all stone except the breast and the arms and the hand. They say it inhabits caverns, into which it drags unwary passers-by. If you throw a spear or fire at it with a bullet, they say the spear or bullet will turn back on you and wound you.

To this day, the cave is known as the Den of Nargun. In wetter seasons than the one during which Howitt, Bungil Bottle and Turnmile visited, a waterfall passes over the mouth of the cave. Today the Den of Nargun is part of the Mitchell River National Park. Unfortunately the den and its mysterious approach through tree ferns have been compromised by stairways, handrails, signs and litter, along with a large car-park nearby.

Times have changed since Howitt's journey. The modern bushwalker or paddler would be fortunate indeed to find a lyre-bird in the den, and koalas have not been seen in the area for a long time. But canoeists are no longer the rare visitors they were when Howitt and his companions made their journey down the gorge in 1875. ▲

Brian Walters (see Contributors in Wild no 1) is a bushwalker and Nordic skier with a strong commitment to the preservation of our wild places. A barrister from Melbourne, he successfully defended the protesters arrested and charged with trespass last summer in the National Estate forests of East Gippsland, Victoria.



# AUSTRALIA'S ALPINE RESORTS

A case for better management of our highest peaks, by *Jamie Pittock*

▲ THE STATUTORY AUTHORITY MANAGING Victoria's alpine resorts—the Alpine Resorts Commission—has plans to double the size of the resorts. The Victorian Minister for Tourism, Conservation and Environment, Steve Crabb, recently withdrew State funding for the ARC's plans and is pessimistic about development in the present economic climate. It is believed, however, that he has approved the plans in principle, and favours allowing alpine resorts to 'evolve naturally'. In New South Wales, resorts continue to expand within Kosciuszko National Park and on its borders.

Areas long cherished by bushwalkers and ski tourists are next in line for development, while there are still no satisfactory answers to the questions, 'What is the organization most appropriate to the management of resorts?' and 'Has the ski industry any long-term plans?'.

Alpine resorts are a small part of the Australian Alps and are adjacent to or within extensive National Parks; yet they are very significant to alpine conservation. First, most plants and animals in alpine communities are endemic to the Alps—they are not found anywhere else. Second, less than 1% of the Australian continent contains alpine vegetation. This has not always been the case. Most of the past two million years—about 90%—has consisted of glacial periods—colder and drier than at present. At the height of the last glacial age, about 16,000 years ago, the tree line was as much as 1,000 metres lower than it is now. Many alpine plant species grew across western Victoria, and the mountain pygmy possum was to be found at Jenolan Caves and at Cloggs Cave near Buchan. In today's relatively warm and wet climate, alpine vegetation is restricted to refuges on the series of high peaks separated by the lower ranges of the Alps. Each 'island' of alpine peaks contains habitat critical to the



**Above,** the 'pristine alpine beauty' of Mt Hotham, Victoria, showing its landslides resulting from ski-run development. **David Tatnall.** **Right,** the handiwork at close quarters—the ironically named Heavenly Valley ski run. **Jamie Pittock**

survival of these isolated communities. Hence all alpine areas are important to conservation.

Alpine resorts, too, are situated on the highest peaks. They contain crucial breeding habitat for animal species—such as the mountain pygmy possum—adapted to the severe alpine conditions. In Victoria, the removal from resorts 30 years ago of cattle grazing, which continues elsewhere in the high country, gave the alpine resorts special significance as a refuge for many plant species. If climatic warming predicted as

a result of the greenhouse effect takes place, alpine environments will be further restricted to the very highest peaks, and the land in alpine resorts will become still more important to the conservation of alpine plants and animals.

In Victoria, the ARC's record in protecting these species is poor despite commitments contained in the Alpine Resorts Act. It has not undertaken any surveys or studies of the alpine environment and does not employ any biologists. In NSW the only protection is that offered by the flawed Environmental Impact Statement procedure. Significant habitat for the mountain pygmy possum, an animal which survives in critically small numbers, was no obstacle to the

# LITTLE *White* LIE

A small but significant deception? Mt Deception in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, by Alan Thomas

▲ DURING HIS 1840 EXPEDITION, EXPLORER Edward John Eyre sighted a dominating peak to the north, tumbling in hills to the plains and situated a little west of the main body of the Flinders Ranges. He made for it, hoping the view from the summit might show some northern limit to Lake Torrens and give a promise of better country ahead.

Almost 150 years later, on 28 April 1989, our small group took in that same view as our vehicles negotiated the track to our drop-off point at Tea Tree Well, on Beltana Station.

Screeching galahs took off into the crisp morning air, announcing our arrival at the solitary, dilapidated windmill. Leaving the comfort of our cars, Chris Willis, Andrew Vidale and I busied ourselves with last-minute preparations for our three-day bushwalk.

It seemed like only yesterday that I had first suggested the walk to Chris. We had decided on a commemorative walk along the Mt Deception Range in recognition of the achievements of explorer Eyre and surveyor Samuel Parry, and 12 months had been spent organizing and preparing for the walk.

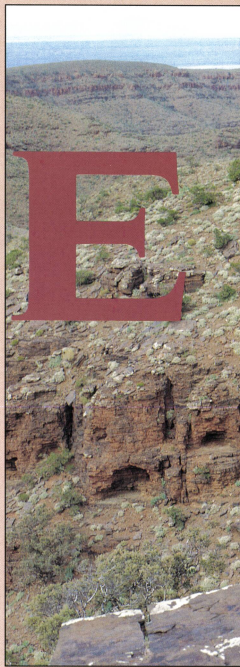
Enthusiasm mounted as we slipped on our bulging packs, hearing faint cries of protest from our bodies. Ahead of us lay the first 11 kilometre leg to the summit. Farewells and wishes of good luck echoed in our minds as our support team, Yvonne Thomas and Cheryl Willis, left us to establish a base camp at Mt Deception outstation.

Skirting the edge of the swampy creek bed, we made for the old ruin, isolated close by on higher ground. It was sad that recent downpours had reduced the stone and mud walls to a pile of rubble, a reminder of nature's harsh reality.

Setting our compass bearings, we dodged through the last of the ti-tree encircling the hut and stood in silence at the nearby grave. The simple headstone was in memory of Martin Blinman, aged 16 years. His death on 12 January 1862 followed five days after that of his ten-year-old sister, Selina. They were the eldest son and daughter of Robert 'Peg-leg' Blinman, and lost their lives to slow fever during his expedition for copper ore at Mt Deception.

Ever mindful of the loads on our backs, we resumed our course over an undulating plain before dropping down into a scenic creek that would take us into the foothills. Colourful parrots darting amongst the branches of the river red gums lining the banks entertained us. Keen to keep our boots dry, we avoided the small streams of water that were still flowing into the rock-pools scattered along the bed.

Grazing kangaroos watched from a distance as we frequently stopped to build small stone cairns. Andrew and I, armed with heavy medium-format cameras, took advantage of these breaks and photographed various aspects of the local flora and surrounding landscape. Due to the recent unseasonal rain, extensive



*Above, within reach of the summit. Or are they? (It is Mt Deception, after all.) All photos Andrew Vidale*

growth was evident. Most trees and shrubs were in full bloom against a prolific background of wildflowers carpeting the ground. Like a kaleidoscope, the country had exploded in a memorable display of colour.

Rocky terrain greeted us as we left the tranquillity of the creek for the foothills and our planned route along the main southern ridge. Taking care on the ankle-straining rocks, we scrambled steeply upwards. The steep incline quickly dampened our enthusiasm and brought about a noticeable change in our



they eventuate—cater for summer use and be viable all year round. The ARC, however, has no plans for the facilities this would require—though Minister Steve Crabb has suggested that golf courses be installed. Thredbo, in NSW, is the only resort well used in summer. Elsewhere, one look is enough to indicate that patronage in summer has

ual information available to substantiate its claims, and distributed few discussion papers. It is responsible to the Minister for Tourism.

According to an article in the *Age* of 5 July 1990, the ARC underwent a 'drastic reorganization' in early July, with nearly half its head-office staff being axed. Three head-office divisions are being

*ad infinitum* on the 1981 report of the Skiing Industry Working Party and the alpine area recommendations of the Land Conservation Council from 1979 and 1983. The working party's report was neither systematic nor impartial, and all three reports were prepared at a time when the industry was booming. The crude environmental knowledge of the day has since been greatly refined, and there is a better understanding of species such as the mountain pygmy possum and processes such as the greenhouse effect.

The skiing industry's plans for expansion have been based on 'a need to meet market demand', but it has not distinguished between actual demand and 'demand with marketing' in making its forecasts. Consequently, many of its predictions—since the 1979 figure of 14–17% annual growth—were exaggerated and have not eventuated. The ARC, too, has forecast high growth of around 4–7% a year. A consultant's report commissioned by the Victorian National Parks Association, on the other hand,

*[did] not support the view that there is still a large amount of unmet demand for ski facilities. It is thus hard to justify extensive development in alpine areas. [There are] serious shortcomings in the collection of data on visitor numbers [which make it] impossible to draw accurate conclusions about visitor use and potential demand.*<sup>5</sup>

Despite good snow last season, reports indicate that the number of visitors did not increase noticeably. Many industry observers have predicted a major decline in the growth rate of visits to resorts.

Regardless of demand, there is a need to discuss and determine appropriate environmental constraints for alpine resorts and the desirable level of services provided for skiers. The creation of environmental slums in Australia's Alps is not the answer.

#### Footnotes

1 R W Galloway, 'The Potential Impact of Climate Changes on Australian Ski Fields' in G I Pearman (ed), *Greenhouse: Planning for Climatic Change*, CSIRO, 1988.

2 J Kesteven, unpublished Honours thesis cited in the *Age*, 19 July 1989.

3 K J Hennessy and A B Pittock, *Regional Impact of the Greenhouse Effect on Victoria*, CSIRO—Ministry for Planning and Environment, 1989.

4 A Riddell, unpublished study.

5 E Clark, *A Review of Estimates of Victorian Skifield [sic] Usage with Considerations for Their Future*, Victorian National Parks Association, 1990. ▲

Jamie Pittock is a physical geographer who has conducted research into the vegetation history of Australia's south-eastern highlands. A keen bushwalker and ski tourist, he works for the VNPA, campaigning for the conservation and better management of our wild places.



been low. Guthega and Blue Cow resorts are on the market and Thredbo is reputed to be losing money; in such circumstances, it's hard to see what sense there would be in expanding even with snow—let alone without it.

New South Wales and Victoria provide examples of several different styles of alpine resort management. The Thredbo resort is managed by a single lessee and monitored by the National Parks & Wildlife Service, with relatively good results. Where the NPWS has been responsible for both management and regulation—as, for example, at Perisher—the environment has suffered. Although the service has undertaken well-researched studies, has consulted with the public during thorough planning and has a good understanding of the conservation measures needed at resorts, it lacks the resources to implement them. The planning debate therefore invariably ends in an unsatisfactory compromise; despite reasonable objections, expansion continues.

Victoria's Alpine Resorts Commission suffers from a similar conflict of purpose: it is required both to regulate and to promote skiing. It is the advocate for development and the governing agency. Public consultation in ski resort management has been minimal. Environmental and bushwalking groups were not consulted during preparation of the current plans for expansion (although numerous skiing industry groups were closely involved). The ARC provided no discussion of policy and few resort management options. It made little fact-

disbanded and the two regional offices closed. The driving force appears to have been pressure from ski clubs and commercial operators, fuelled by industry objections to the ARC's increase of annual rates to 3.5% of site value. According to the article, the ARC had been described by the skiing industry as 'big on talk but short on action'. Unfortunately, the result may be that parochial, industry-dominated local management committees have more direct input into decision making.

The ARC has also been under pressure to improve its financial affairs. The Victorian Government set it the goal of becoming self-funding, but it has been unable to achieve this. Its current operating deficit is at least \$2 million. The government has also been embarrassed by the Auditor General's criticism of the ARC for failing to produce audited accounts in the last two financial years.

The only apparent advantage of the ARC organization is the existence of legislated resort boundaries which constrain expansion. Resort management could be incorporated into the State's biggest land management body, the Department of Conservation and Environment, but care would need to be taken that other popular areas—Mt Buffalo, for example, or even Tidal River at Wilsons Promontory—were not excluded from parks and thrown open to development.

It is not known on what projections of growth in demand the NSW Government bases resort development. The ARC bases its policy of downhill skiing growth

Stirling, however, has already been set aside for the construction of downhill ski runs and an alpine village, and important areas within existing resorts face further developments.

New runs are proposed for Mt McKay, near Falls Creek, and Mt Loch, near Mt Hotham. Developments at Hotham would subsume approximately six kilometres of the Alpine Walking Track.

All expansion plans feature 'satellite day bases'—car-parks, locker rooms and restaurants for day visitors, located far from the parent resort. Mt Loch



**Above,** there's nothing subtle about the Alpine Resorts Commission's signs. (Falls Creek, Bogong High Plains, Victoria.) **Right,** sewerage evaporator, Dinner Plain, near Mt Hotham. Pittock

car-park is one such location. New road works and car-parks, village-centre complexes and many more beds are also planned.

Facilities for cross country skiers would be placed at the periphery of resorts, pushing skiers into remote and exposed areas such as Mt Loch and the vicinity of the Rocky Valley Dam. Extensive 'shelter hut' proposals indicate both a failure to grasp basic issues affecting safety in cross country skiing and a lack of consultation with interested groups in the community.

Expansion of ski resorts is a part of the Victorian Government's Social Justice Strategy—a case of 'Let them eat snow'. There is no guarantee, however, that the environmental or recreational impact of these plans will be independently reviewed.

Many readers would consider the development of private resorts below the snow line relatively benign in environmental terms and hence welcome. Indeed, the redevelopment of existing towns has much potential. However, the recent record of new development projects leaves much to be desired. Victoria's 'model development' at Dinner Plain has a failing sewage system and has necessitated upgrading of the poor access road. The quality of roads to other ski fields limits their further use, and their widely dispersed nature precludes access from below the snow line by ski tube as an economically viable option.

In NSW, planning restrictions have failed to contain projects that threaten the environment. The ski tube terminal (which conservationists consider should have been located at Jindabyne instead of Bullocks Flat) is now the site of a planned resort. The Thredbo valley has seen increasing ribbon development in spite of shire restrictions; most recently, the Lake Crackenback village was built on a site adjacent to Kosciuszko National Park. If the proposed Very Fast Train were ever to reach Jindabyne, unprecedented expansion would be the likely result. The idea has the poor Victorian ski industry running scared.

Although resorts below the snow line lessen the impact on the alpine environment, the people occupying them would still require additional downhill ski runs. If other users and the environment are to be considered—particularly in the face of the likely impact of the greenhouse effect—there simply is not room for further alpine resort growth.

Greenhouse theorists predict a rise in temperature in the Australian Alps of between 1.5 and 4.5°C over 30 years. If this were to occur, only Perisher and Mt Hotham would remain viable ski resorts—and marginally, at that. Four studies now suggest that the future of Australian skiing is limited. According to the Galloway study, Australia's ski fields could be gone within 50 years.<sup>1</sup> An Australian National University study found that the average length of the ski season and the depth of snow have declined since the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> A CSIRO

report predicted far fewer nights with temperatures below zero, and a 3° temperature rise by the year 2030.<sup>3</sup> A Melbourne University study commissioned by the ARC found a significant warming trend in the Alps but recorded no statistically significant change in snow depth.<sup>4</sup> Most, though not all, scientists and governments give credence to predictions of climatic change.

To the obvious question of whether we should be spending millions of dollars and damaging the environment to expand ski resorts that may become redundant in a few decades, the ski industry has until now typically responded that the greenhouse effect is 'only a theory'. Instead, it claims, snow-making and the use of chemicals will extend the ski season. This ignores three points.

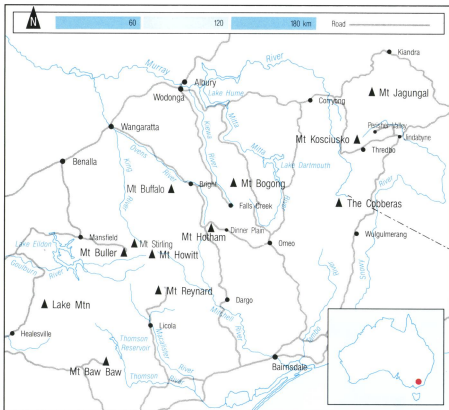
First, the infrastructure of snow-making and the huge demands it places on supplies of power and water would be environmentally unacceptable at some resorts, including Mt Hotham. The new power line to Thredbo, finished last summer, is a case in point.

Second, the 'technological fix' offered by snow-making might only postpone loss of snow if the climate were to become warmer, and begs the question of whether an extra few years' skiing would be worth the environmental cost.

Finally, changes to weather patterns could wipe out both artificial and natural snow.

It is claimed that the industry could adapt to greenhouse changes should

## Australia's Alpine Resorts



development in 1987 of the Blue Cow resort in Kosciusko National Park, and appears to be none to proposed resort expansion in Victoria, either. In the past two years, sizeable and visually intrusive new facilities have been built close to significant botanical and zoological sites on the ridge between Mt Hotham and Mt Loch; no biological studies were conducted, and repeated requests made to the ARC for consultation were unsuccessful.

The deleterious effects of alpine resorts on the natural environment are many. They include the spreading of weeds and other introduced plant species. There have been 51 species of weed recorded on the Bogong High Plains and 29 in Falls Creek village alone. The ARC at present administers a programme of exotic tree planting in Victorian resorts.

Resorts support and facilitate the spread of vermin. Roads give introduced predators access into natural areas, and villages house them. At Mt Hotham, pets belonging to residents and visitors roam at will—an infringement of ARC regulations—and prey on mountain pygmy possums.

Erosion is caused. It appears that the ARC has on a number of occasions contravened a section of the Victorian Conservation, Forests & Lands Act whose aim is to encourage soil conservation in alpine areas. After heavy rains at Mt Hotham in December 1988, massive landslides washed out more than 36 hectares of freeway-like ski runs, and silting caused considerable damage to the boulder-scrub habitat of the pygmy possum.

Native vegetation is cleared. The ARC's plans for the expansion of Victoria's resorts provide for the clearing of 216.2 hectares of new runs—150 hectares on Mt Stirling alone. In the Australian Capital Territory, much land was cleared in an attempt—apparently unsuccessful—to establish a resort at Corin Forest.

Streams and waterways are polluted. In NSW this is a regular event; the Perisher resort, in particular, is notorious. Sewage is treated to a secondary level in Victorian resorts, and nutrient-rich water released downstream. Toilet tissue and sanitary products decorate Mt Buller's discharge site. Treatment plants can barely cope with peak loads in winter, and reports of raw sewage discharge are common—though vehemently denied. Figures suggest that the resort on freehold land at Dinner Plain, near Mt Hotham, produces between 1.8 and 3.5 times more sewage than was originally predicted. Last summer there was an emergency discharge into the Victoria River. Siltation and re-routing have affected water quality and damaged mountain streams, and threaten a rare insect with extinction at Mt Buller and Mt Stirling. Future resort



expansion, at Mt Hotham in particular, would require the construction of more dams.

Abandoned resort infrastructure and rubbish 'decorate' the landscape. Rubbish from Thredbo village is still dumped at a tip by the Thredbo River. Victorian resorts sport substantial quantities of rubbish and disused equipment.

The mountain landscape is degraded. Few alpine peaks remain without views of resort facilities. The Blue Cow resort is visible from the Main Range. Mt Buller and Mt Hotham scar the Victorian Alps. Even at the relatively well planned Falls Creek resort, a restaurant complex built in 1988 overlooks the Bogong High Plains from Frying Pan Spur.

Resorts in Kosciusko National Park are in theory governed by the 1982 plan of management. Similar procedures are standard for public land in Victoria. However, the ARC's management is often in conflict with standards set by the Victorian Department of Conservation and Environment and the tri-State accord for alpine management.

Australia's snow-fields are indisputably limited; when it comes to allocating land for recreation, there is little to go round. The balance between the demands for land of resort-based and independent recreation is determined in NSW by the National Parks & Wildlife Service management plan, and in Victoria by the Land Conservation Council.

In NSW, 1,100 hectares of Kosciusko National Park were alienated for the construction of the Blue Cow resort in 1987. The Crackenback and Kings Cross areas have been earmarked for resort expansion although no proposals are imminent. None the less, incremental expansion continues apace. Approval was recently given for an increase in the capacity of the Thredbo village from 3,200 to 4,800 beds and the construction there of an international hotel, lodges, town houses, condominiums, and a sports centre.

Land that can be allocated to Victorian resorts is restricted by legislation, at least until the next Land Conservation Council review, due in about 1993. Mt





pace. We persevered to an altitude of 400 metres.

Needing no invitation, we collapsed in amongst a clump of windswept trees and replenished our energy supplies with lunch. A small group of conical hills to the east caught our interest and we named them the 'Horse Shoe Peaks' in recognition of an ancient shoe we'd found a short time before. I wondered whether the shoe had come from one of Eyre's horses when he descended the mountain and rode south-east to a water hole near Beltana, which he named Depot Pool.

Reluctantly we persuaded our sore muscles to continue, with the promise of

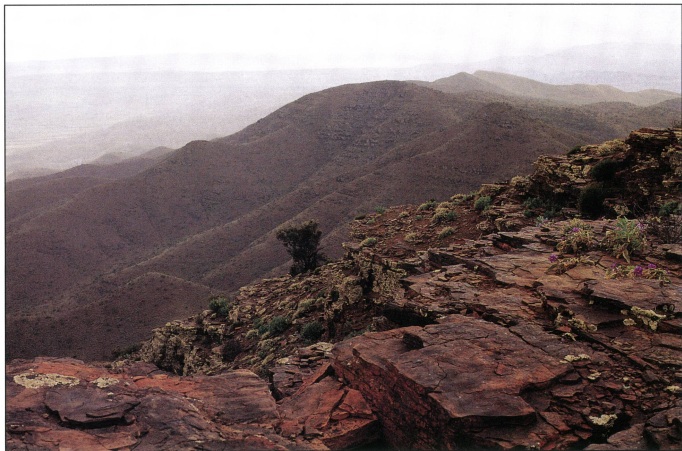
an easier gradient once we joined up with a rarely used four-wheel-drive track. Spectacular views of the rugged ravines, cliffs, amphitheatres and encompassing land revived our spirits and at the same time kept our cameras busy.

Large numbers of flies appeared and turned brightly coloured rucksacks black as they fought for a free ride. We were confronted with another steep section as our course zig-zagged up the mountain. Memories of a steam-engine story heard as a child flashed before me as I pushed my body to its limit while Andrew speculated on the morality of importing Sherpas. Thoughts of a possible mutiny entered my mind as I recalled telling my

companions that this would be the easy part. Dubious practices come into their own when you recruit walkers! To deceive or not to deceive? We were unanimous on one point—in future we would have to lighten our packs.

We continued our upward hike and were rewarded with a cooling breeze as the rough slope once again levelled out. Encouraged by more frequent glimpses of the summit, we pushed on along the now familiar track. Eventually, however, weary bodies and lack of time forced us to establish our first camp at an altitude of 630 metres, just one and a half kilometres from our goal. Although far from perfect, our campsite on the





*Above, advancing rain to the north, over Mt Nor-West. Near right, the plaque, placed at the base of the Mt Deception summit cairn. Far right, the vastness of Australia; from Windy Bluff.*

exposed plateau became affectionately known as 'Windy Bluff'.

Following a quick search for wood, we soon had a welcome fire alight and then began to look for a suitable piece of ground on which to lay our sleeping bags and mats. With the sun setting lower in the sky, we enjoyed a filling meal. To the west, Lake Torrens was glistening under a colourful sunset. It was quite an experience to see the normally dry salt lake close to full capacity, supposedly for the first time this century.

Enveloped by the clear night sky, we relaxed around the fire, and retired to our stony beds under a sparkling canopy of stars.

Darkness faded to grey as Saturday morning crept in. Not wishing to endure the orthopaedic comfort of my rock bed a moment longer, I abandoned the warmth of my sleeping bag and faced the cool breeze. I quickly stoked the coals back into life. Unable to resist the lure of the flames, Andrew and Chris soon joined me. With slow and awkward movements, we ate breakfast as the sun appeared on the horizon, its golden rays dancing through breaks in the clouds. Rain clouds? I checked my equipment list...definitely no mention of rain clouds! Who was it said that the best laid plans go astray?

Eager to embark on the remaining leg to the summit, we broke camp, and with

lighter packs picked our way down a steep scree slope leading into a small saddle. A mob of feral goats grazed quietly, oblivious to our descent until a dislodged boulder sent them scattering. In a frenzy of bleating, they darted out of sight down the side of a valley.

Climbing out of the saddle, we found the terrain more favourable. Our route now consisted of rock ledges and rocky outcrops without the numerous stones that had plagued us the previous day. Every few metres gave new views and different perspectives of the valleys and ravines as they dropped away steeply on either side of us. The early morning light emphasized the creek beds, etched like veins into the side of the mountain.

Hampered by occasional showers, we scrambled onwards, invigorated by the magnificent scenery and fresh, moist air. With a barrage of echoing cooees, we caught the attention of a Department of Lands team camped on the plain a few kilometres to the east. Surveyors Alex Poznanski and Peter Williss had climbed the 'short route' to the summit the day before and prepared the foundation for a plaque. All going well, they and others in the survey team would join us at the top around mid-morning.

During a brief but heavy downpour, Andrew and I became concerned for the welfare of our cameras and took refuge in one of many small caves. Chris scouted on ahead to the next rocky outcrop undeterred. He backtracked when he found the vertical descent a little daunting and chose a safer route

round its base. Two curious euros on a nearby ledge viewed Andrew and me discontentedly and we wondered whether we had stolen their shelter. Overcome by camera shyness, they disappeared before I could photograph them.

Enticed by the sunshine and with the summit only a stone's throw away, we left our dry abode and discovered Chris patiently waiting a short distance from the top. We hurried up the last few metres like excited school children and triumphantly stood on the rocky bluff that, at 691 metres, is Mt Deception's summit.

We soaked in the panoramic views and looked forward to the arrival of the survey team, only to find our rest short-lived as they clambered breathlessly into view. The comradeship between surveyor and bushwalker was genuine and instantaneous. It was quite a thrill for me to meet South Australia's Surveyor-General, John Porter, after many months of exchanging letters and phone calls.

We reflected on the historic achievements of explorer Eyre—his epic exploration of the north in 1840 and his subsequent ascent and naming of Mt Deception on 10 July of that year. One could imagine the disappointment Eyre must have felt when he saw Lake Torrens to the west, as 'large and mysterious as ever', whilst to the north was a 'cheerless looking waste, the extraordinary deception caused by mirage and refraction'.

Blessed with kinder weather, we could see land to the north-east, promising the land bridge that Eyre had sought across his supposed 'Horse Shoe Lake'. Equally inspiring was the stone cairn, one of many built by surveyor Samuel Parry. The Deception cairn, erected by Parry in 1858, stood as a reminder of his trigonometrical survey of the land between the Flinders Ranges and Lake Torrens.

Pastoralists had rushed to the area with the granting of 14-year leases by the government. The Mt Deception Lake was acquired by William Swan during 1857, only to be taken over with many others by Beltana Station in 1867. Today the Deception Hut stands empty amongst ancient river red gums in the beautiful, largely unchanged valley.

We were also reminded of another early explorer—John McDouall Stuart—who 130 years earlier had sighted the mountain in his explorations. All agreed that the sweeping views justified every sore muscle experienced during the climb. Even with the approaching rain, we could distinguish Mt Nor-West and

Termination Hill to the north. In spectacular comparison, the main body of the northern Flinders Ranges towered majestically in their serried ranks to the east. We identified many local landmarks with relative ease. John instructed us on the methods used by the early surveyors in the days when time was on their side.

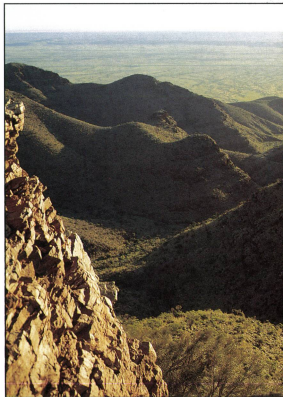
After lunch the final batch of cement was mixed and it was a proud moment when, shortly after one o'clock, John and I fixed the commemorative plaque at the base of the cairn. The official unveiling followed, with a champagne toast to the success of our joint venture.

With the increasing threat of rain, I quickly organized the customary group photographs, after which preparations were made to depart the summit on our second leg to Mt Deception outstation. The survey team returned to the main valley, leaving us to follow our planned five kilometre route to the hut.

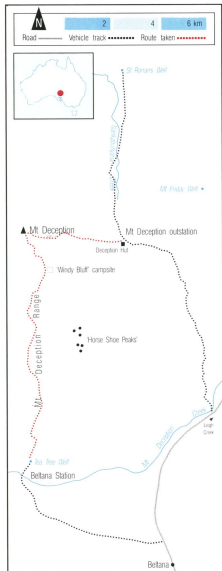
Traversing the side of the main valley, we crossed over a saddle and descended into an adjoining valley. The steepening slope necessitated Tele-mark-like turns (minus the skis) in an effort to slow down our rapid descent. With an occasional slide, we weaved and skidded our way downwards and reached the bottom relatively unscathed.

jumped all over us, full of boundless energy, before starting on an endless series of questions.

Later, with the combination of tiredness and impending rain, both parties retired to their tents for a much needed sleep. I felt a great sense of



## Mt Deception



The main creek bed that drained the valley promised more excitement as we once again gathered speed and were soon racing over large boulders and rock slabs.

Sheer exhaustion accompanied us as the valley flashed by and gave way to wide, open plains. Soaked in sweat, I fumbled with the 'quick-release' buckles on my pack and let it fall to the ground like a sack of potatoes. Cooling off, we checked our map and made a note to change the descent route a little when climbing the track notes.

We climbed out of the creek at a leisurely pace and walked the remaining two and a half kilometres across the glibber plain towards the old hut, where Yvonne and Cheryl were busy with preparations for a celebratory dinner.

Sporting their little day packs, Carrie-Ann and Benjamin raced out to meet father Chris as we drew closer to camp and a welcome cup of coffee. They

achievement as I drifted off to sleep while the first drops rolled down the fly of our tent and on to the ground.

Sunday morning brought no reprieve from the rain and as I listened to its steady tempo against the tent, I realized that the last leg of our walk would have to be postponed. Walking in the rain wasn't a real problem, but getting to and away from the pick-up point with the vehicles would be impossible. All was not lost, however, for we knew we would return on another occasion and finish that last eight kilometre walk along the valley to St Ronans Well.

The walk was a great success and I recommend it to anyone who may come up our way. Mt Deception, although not an Everest, is one of the higher peaks in the northern Flinders Ranges and rewards with outstanding views those adventurous and energetic enough to seek them.

I think back to those who went before us. They were the pioneers of our great Australian wilderness, often facing hardships beyond those we know today. Recognition of their achievements can only strengthen our common bond and that of those who follow us. Would I do it again? You bet! ▲

Alan Thomas runs a photographic business in Leigh Creek, South Australia. In his spare time he enjoys rockclimbing and bushwalking in the nearby Flinders Ranges, taking photographs, and travelling to remote places by four-wheel-drive vehicle.

*Wild Canoeing*



**CANOES CROSS**





## Tasmania's Denison River approached the hard way, by *David Carmichael*

▲ IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON WHEN WE reached a small, level area within the Denison River valley which would pass as a reasonable third campsite. I was partly dehydrated and totally exhausted; the day had been very long and demanding. In the deepening twilight we gathered firewood, collected water from a small but welcome supply, unloaded our kayaks, and prepared tent sites. Later, around the camp fire, we voiced subdued thoughts: when would we reach this elusive torrent?

The Denison River courses free and untamed through the heart of

Tasmania's rugged south-west wilderness, sidling the majestic Prince of Wales Range before it cuts through a series of gorges to join the regulated waters of the mighty Gordon River. The Denison had first come to our notice when, two years after a journey down the Franklin River, we'd scanned maps of Tasmania in search of another wild river to kayak. Initial research had shown that at least four parties had previously ventured this way in canoes; the first was the noted pioneer, Olegas Truchanas.

All these trips, however, had begun by helicopter, which had placed parties lock, stock, barrel—and kayak—in the river's headwaters. We investigated the cost of chartering a similar service. Prices varied, but all were prohibitive. Could the kayaks be brought in by an overland route, we wondered. A check of

**Above**, salubrious campsite on the backwaters of the Gordon Dam. **Left**, the appropriately named Freedoms Gate. All photos David Carmichael

topographic maps revealed that the backwaters of Lake Gordon reached to within six kilometres of the river and that only a minor range separated the two. We discovered an account of a trip by a group of rafters, who had carried their deflated craft in to the Denison by a similar route and reported mostly button grass slopes along the way.

So it was that we four set off by canoe from Strathgordon around noon on a fine March day. We quickly paddled the 14 kilometres across the backwaters of the dam. On arriving at our landing point near Pearce's Basin, we found that the dominant vegetation was definitely not button grass. Indeed, the densely matted giant sword grass, ti-tree and

# COUNTRY



horizontal scrub that we now entered would prove a major obstacle in the days to come.

After a preliminary reconnaissance, a prominent spur was chosen for the ascent. Progress was slow as we dragged our empty kayaks steadily upwards in the remaining hours of the afternoon. A shoulder-strap of nylon webbing attached to the front hand-loop

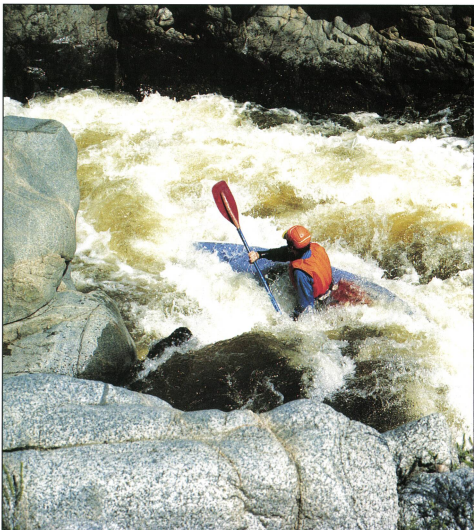


*Above, forget ski touring; cross country kayaking is the thing. Near right, the moment of truth in a grade-three rapid. Far right, more cross country kayaking, this time in Marriotts Gorge.*

of each boat assisted us greatly in our efforts. We returned to the lakeside and the rest of our gear, and set up camp.

The following day we transported the remaining items to the point where we had dumped the kayaks. The party then divided. One person would surge forward into the dense foliage with an empty boat to clear a path up the steepening hillside. The others would follow with the remaining kayaks and gear. It was hot, tiring labour in the humidity of the understorey scrub. Our meagre supply of water soon began to run low. To make matters worse, the ridge we had chosen was diverted by a series of deep gullies away from our objective—a low saddle. With every alteration in course, the need to climb higher became more pressing.

By the day's end two of the group had crested the ridge and sighted the Prince



of Wales Range in the dwindling light. We had left our kayaks a distance below, and the other equipment further away still. Our parched mouths eagerly consumed the last of the water and we settled into a weary sleep, lying under the stars in the track we had forged.

Daybreak. After swallowing a few energy bars we continued the portage. Finally all our gear was assembled on the crest. Ahead and below lay the Denison valley, but there was no let-up in the thickness of the vegetation. Down, down, down! Each person roped his boat forward in stages on the steep descent. It would bound down the hillside, sometimes almost striking the person ahead. Eventually its momentum would be halted as it buried itself nose first in a stubborn ti-tree. At the bottom of a small watercourse we gratefully scooped out the remnants of a creek—mere blotches of water.

Our third night came with still no sign of the river. The following morning we pressed on. At least we were now scrub-bashing on the level. Finally the bushes cleared to reveal a sparkling, meandering stream. We splashed about in our joy at having arrived at last. Eventually we paddled off downstream to camp within the Truchanas Huon Pine Reserve.

A day of rest was called for. We relaxed and absorbed the wild, remote atmosphere amongst huge trees thousands of years old. Our enthusiasm returned. Time passed as we explored the wonders of this ancient forest. We paddled on the next day, an eager group. The water level was low as we glided over many shingle banks; we still found several good rapids up to grade three standard.

The river narrowed as we proceeded through Marriotts Gorge. Some rapids required portaging here. Soon the sheer walls of Freedoms Gate could be viewed in the distance, rising above the dense foliage of the immediate river banks. Here the river slices between two converging north-south ridges, from the Prince of Wales and Hamilton Ranges, before emerging into a less rugged landscape. The traverse of Freedoms Gate occupied several hours and involved more portaging. This paled, however, in comparison with the effort that had been required to reach the river in the first place. A simple drop of 1.2 metres, encountered midway through, was shot without mishap.

From the Gate, the Denison meanders westwards, flowing idly through magnificent stands of Huon, myrtle and celery-top pines. Occasionally it gathers



speed over short races, the tannin-stained water giving the polished, submerged stones an amber hue. We passed several attractive campsites but

pressed on, hoping before the day's end to negotiate the Denison Gorge, the final obstacle before the Gordon River. The confluence with the Maxwell River was passed, and immediately the Denison headed southwards, diverted by the Nicholls Range.

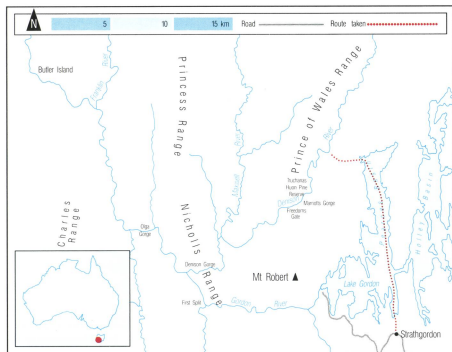
The weather to the west was showing threatening signs as our party entered the ravine. At first progress was swift, but eventually the entire river disappeared under a conglomeration of huge boulders. A long, arduous portage was required with little daylight remaining.

The weather looked ominous and the availability of campsites had diminished. We perched on a rock ledge too small for tents and made camp—a jumble of strewn tent flies and bivvy bags. Late in the night the heavens gave vent to their fury. By morning the storm had passed but our group was saturated.

We packed away our sodden belongings and continued the portage over slippery, water-worn boulders, then launched boats for the short paddle to the junction. The Gordon was swirling and boiling with a large discharge from



## Denison River



the dam. Any idea of paddling upstream to the First Split was dismissed by a dispirited group. Our kayaks were swept downstream to a point just above the Olga Gorge, where we located a compact but pleasant campsite amongst the thick temperate rain forest. There we spent the afternoon drying sodden equipment.

We agreed to make a push the following day in order to meet the tourist boat, the *Denison Star*, at noon near Butler Island. This entailed an early start. The rapids in the Olga Gorge are simple but we approached them with caution. Any swim in the powerful current of the Gordon would be a long, cold one. Limestone cliffs swept by, as did the confluences of the Jane and Franklin Rivers. Spurred on by the thought of a fresh smorgasbord, we arrived at the island just as the boat appeared. Along with several Franklin River rafters, we were pulled on board. ▲

*David Carmichael* (see Contributors in Wild no 21) began bushwalking while at school, then branched into other outdoor pursuits—kayaking, cross country skiing, caving and canyoning. He has walked and kayaked in his home State (NSW), in Victoria, Tasmania and New Zealand.

# ELYNE MITCHELL

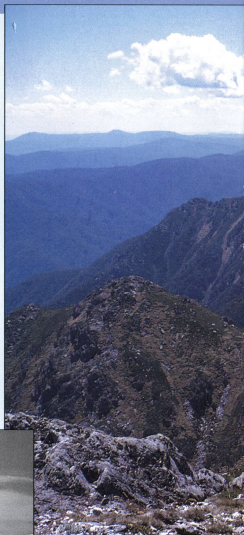
Glenn van der Knijff pays his respects to a long-time explorer, much-read chronicler and defender of the Snowy Mountains

*The stars were paling above Townsend and the gleam of the moon had died, leaving a cold, still darkness in Geehi till a shaft of light crept down the sky, moth-winged and uncertain, to touch Mt Twynam and to filter slowly through the faint mist. Like a shimmer of golden gauze it descended on to the mysterious river flats. Elyne Mitchell, Australia's Alps, 1942.*

▲ ELYNE MITCHELL IS EMOTIONALLY AND physically a part of the Snowy Mountains. This is perhaps no wonder, for she has lived at their foot for over 50 years, on a property called Towong Hill. Towong, as it was originally known, overlooks the flats of the Murray River just north of Khancoban. It is here that two rivers, the Indi and the Swampy Plain, meet to form the Murray. Their waters originate high on the Main Range of the Snowy Mountains, which form a most majestic backdrop to the river view from the homestead.

The Mitchell family purchased the property in 1899. Walter Mitchell built a house on the hill, and moved there with his new wife Winifred in 1904. Thomas Walter (Tom) Mitchell was born in 1906.

Tom Mitchell's skiing life began in 1913 during a holiday at Klosters, Switzerland, with his father, but he was too young to enjoy it. It was not until 1927, while holidaying in Switzerland from his study of law in England, that Tom again donned a pair of skis. Now he took to skiing like a duck to water and skied in Europe during many of his vacations from Cambridge University and the Inns of Court. When he returned home he continued in the Australian mountains, and then abroad during the summer months. By 1931 he had begun to race in first-class competitions. From 1931 to 1948 Tom was an active member and committee man in the Ski Club of Victoria. Although his ideas and enthusiasm were not always welcomed by



**Above.** Elyne Mitchell taking in the view from the western slopes of Carruthers Peak, Main Range, New South Wales. **Left,** looking across the Western Face of the Main Range to Sentinel Peak, left, and the Dargals, background, in 1973. All uncredited photos Elyne Mitchell collection



other members, he always pushed for the betterment of Victorian skiing and the development of resorts.

In the 1930s, Tom was probably the most accomplished skier in Australia, representing Australia in *Federation Internationale de Ski* (FIS) races and in the prestigious



# MITCHELL



Arlberg-Kandahar race. He was the Australian champion in slalom and downhill events five times during the 1930s. Three times he won the slalom event in New Zealand as well as winning the Muraigl, Serneus and Wolfgang Cups in Switzerland and the Weissfluh-Kublis Trophy. During this most successful period in Tom's skiing career, he met Elyne Chauvel. They were married in November 1935.

Elyne Mitchell, born Sibyl Elyne Keith Chauvel on 30 December 1913, is the daughter of the late General Sir Harry Chauvel, Commander of the Desert Mounted Corps which defeated the

Turkish Army in the Middle East during World War I. Before he became a soldier, Sir Harry Chauvel bred horses and cattle. Elyne often rode with him during school holidays and became an accomplished rider.

Before she met Tom, Elyne had not skied, and her first experience, on a two-week holiday at Mt Buller, was a disaster. Tom was able to convince her to try again and a skiing trip on their honeymoon was the beginning of a long and satisfying career. Although a bit unsure beforehand, Elyne went on this trip in the New Zealand mountains and soon showed promise as a skier—so

much so that by 1937 she was the winner at Mt Kosciusko in the Inter-Dominion Slalom. She learned a lot about snow and skiing during 1937 and this must have stood her in good stead, for in 1938 she won the Argentinian and Canadian downhills. Tom and Elyne were away from home for 18 months visiting the Americas and Europe. Both suffered injuries in Europe; Elyne's broken leg was to cause her problems for years to come.

Whilst excellent ski racers, Elyne and Tom Mitchell are probably better known for their ski exploration. Snow, skiing and adventure must be in the Mitchell blood; Tom's aunt was the first woman to climb Mt Townsend. As a result of exploratory trips to many parts of the Snowy Mountains during the late 1930s and early 1940s, Elyne came to be associated with the mountains as closely as their characteristic plants, soils and wildlife.

▲  
In 1936, Elyne Mitchell went to the Main Range of the Snowy Mountains for her first ski tour. Tom and Elyne left Towong Hill on horseback and headed over the Geehi Wall to Hannells Spur. The view was restricted by a persistent fog but the outline of the mountains could be perceived—the unknown land of which Elyne was to become so much a part. The next day they rode through the fog up Hannells Spur till the depth of snow necessitated the use of skis. By now they had climbed above the fog and had an unlimited view of the snow-covered mountains. Leaving their horses to be taken down, they skied up the Wilkinsons Creek valley to Muellers Pass. After a lunch break they proceeded round the slopes of Mt Clarke, down to the Snowy River, and up to Charlottes Pass. Elyne was not used to skiing with a heavy pack; she was weary. The going was slow and she suffered numerous falls, the most spectacular at the end of the day when, on approaching the Chalet at the Pass, she fell into the creek.

The following day was cloudy and the weather looked ominous. In an attempt to reach the top of Hannells Spur, Tom



and Elyne departed early. Again it was slow going, with an ever-increasing wind and thick fog covering the range. As it was unlikely that they would be able to locate Hannells Spur in such conditions, they returned to the Chalet. They tried again the next day, this time travelling into the full force of a raging gale, but again had to turn back after getting as far as Mt Clarke. A further attempt on the following day was foiled by an evil-looking sky which foretold bad weather that was to last for two weeks.

While the Mitchells are best known for their Main Range epics, they also ventured further afield, skiing to most parts of what is now Kosciusko National Park. One such ski trip took Elyne and friends George Day, Colin Wyatt and Curly Annabel to Cascade Hut south of Dead Horse Gap.

The party left the Chalet at Charlottes Pass and skied over Mt Stilwell to the Rams Head Range. Even though by now a competent skier with a pack on, Elyne had some trouble in skiing down the timbered ridge to Dead Horse Gap. Of the prospect from the Gap she later wrote:

*The valley of the Crackenback, below Dead Horse Gap is one of the few places in our hills where a small alpine village would not be incongruous. The slopes of the Rams Head Range are like many of the ski runs above the smaller European villages; there are plenty of ridges and valleys descending from the main peaks and it is well tucked away from the wind—the curse of Australian skiing.*

Nearly 50 years on, the alpine resort of Thredbo now thrives in this location.

After a well-earned break at Dead Horse Hut the party headed south to the top of the range, then skied towards Purgatory Hill. By following one of the south-west-facing spurs they reached the open plain of the Cascades and ventured downstream towards Cascade Hut. The snow here was thin, which made skiing quite difficult but amusing.

The following day the party headed back up to the main ridge and Kerrys Yards. They returned to the Chalet with only sunburn, and film developed that night as proof of the terrain they had covered. They were probably the first people to ski in the Cascade region.

Another epic ski took Elyne to Mt Jagungal; this unforgettable trip nearly ended in disaster. With Toddy Allen and others, Elyne had planned to visit Alpine Hut with the aid of pack-horses, then ski to Mt Jagungal and eventually finish the tour at Charlottes Pass. Things did not go according to plan.

Military service had taken a lot of men from the district, and the owner of the hut had recently been called up. As a result, his pack-horses would not be available. The burden of carrying all the equipment now fell on the tourists, and Elyne found herself carrying a much heavier pack

than she would have wished. To make matters worse, there was to be no guide for them (as had been planned) and there were two beginners in the group.

To reach Alpine Hut the party had to cross the Snowy Plains. Elyne was struggling—her pack was far too heavy. They eventually reached Brassy Gap in a raging blizzard. Up to this stage they had walked for lack of snow, and the party were now overcome by fatigue and the weather.

*Darkness fell...the wind howled past, buffeting us, stiffening our soaked ski clothes, slowly freezing us through. We waited and waited, while the all-obliterating snow fell thickly over the ski track...At last it seemed best to back-track ourselves while the ski tracks were still faintly visible...*

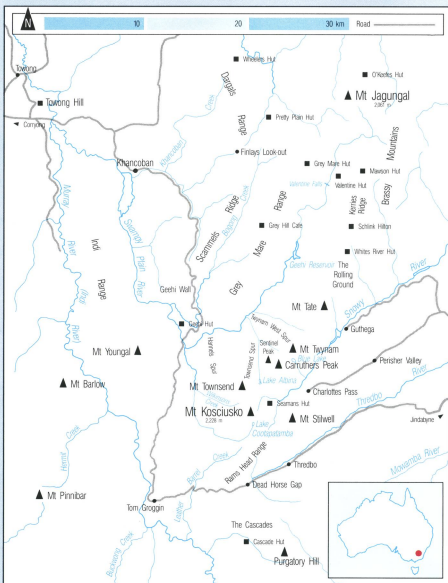
The party took the only wise option left to them, and returned to the Snowy Plains Hut, which they had passed on their inward journey. Eventually, Ken Breakspear came back from Alpine Hut to find them, and they were safely led there through the storm and the night.

After a few days of foul weather, Elyne, Ken Breakspear, and another accomplished skier set off towards Mt Jagungal. Up, over, and down they skied over a series of valleys and ridges till the climb up to Jagungal's 'lion head' summit began. Before long they reached the summit, where they rested, took photographs, and admired the view before returning to Alpine Hut.

The next day the group skied to Whites River Hut; from there Elyne and Ken continued to Dicky Cooper Bogong. Inspired and revitalized by a spectacular mountain sunset, they joyfully turned their skis downhill in the direction of the hut.

After the events of the past few days, the excited party were unable to sleep, so, after a pleasant chat which lasted till 4 am, they headed up the slope behind the hut on to the Rolling Ground. They skied without incident down into Consett Stephen Pass, up on to the slopes of Mt Tate, traversed down to the Snowy River, and puffed their way up to the warm welcome offered by the Chalet.

## Snowy Mountains



Whilst Elyne and Tom particularly enjoyed skiing, they were not idle during the summer months. The running of the farm and their escapades to the alps kept them busy. One summer trip on horseback was particularly memorable. Elyne, again without Tom, went with a group of 20 Girl Guides on a ten-day ride through the Snowy Mountains. The group left Khancoban and camped at Geehi on the banks of the Swampy Plain River. After heavy overnight rain they were forced to stay an extra night as the river was too high to cross safely. They explored the nearby hills, and travelled the following day to Tom Groggin, from where, after another day's exploration, they rode up to Dead Horse Gap. The last time Elyne had been there had been in winter and now it looked completely different, but no less exciting.

After the night's rest they rode up the ridge towards the Rams Heads, planning to reach Blue Lake and thence to return to Dead Horse Gap. Towards Mt Kosciusko they rode through an astonishing mosaic of wild flowers which, with the rock tors and huge cumulus clouds, made an idyllic setting.

They continued over Mts Northcote and Lee and Carruthers Peak before descending to Blue Lake, the Snowy Mountains 'Jewel in the Crown'. When they reluctantly returned to their camp, they were greeted by a terrific hail storm which dampened the mountains but not their enthusiasm.

A misty dawn with sudden shafts of sunlight lifted their spirits and soon they were on their way back to Tom Groggin—returning not along the inward route but past the Cascades. They followed the main ridge almost directly south till they attained the top of the range, then dropped 300 metres into the valley of the Cascades. Descending the Cascades was difficult due to the steepness of the track, but they eventually made it to the Indi (or upper Murray) River which they followed to Tom Groggin.

Elyne had seen Mt Pinnibar many times from afar, and in 1939 she and Tom had been the first people to ski there. It held an immense attraction for her. Being now so close, she had to climb it. After a rest she convinced Tom Groggin's owner to lead a reduced group of four to the star-shaped peak of Mt Pinnibar. The ride up was long and dry. As there was no water en route, riders and horses had to contain their thirst till they reached the top, where a small spring on the southern slope provided relief. Tom Groggin was a welcome sight in the falling light after the hardest day in the saddle yet. The trip itself was over, and after a day of leisure they returned to Towong. Elyne's feelings for the mountains had become ever more intense, and she later wrote:

*I know now that the mountains, bare and blue or covered with snow,*

*summer or winter, spring or fall, have gifts of strength and joy for those who go into their highways with unstinted energy, giving all their understanding to the many voices of the hills.*

From Towong Hill one looks directly on to the western faces of the Main Range—those slopes that drop nearly 2,000 metres from the summits of Townsend and Carruthers steeply into

below Carruthers Peak and Mt Twynam and eventually leads on to a razorback ridge and up to a prominent peak. The following day they skied part of the way down Twynam West Spur and into one of the many gullies which score its sides. Elyne and Toddy skied down an interesting looking run, which brought them right below the peak which they had seen the day before. They could find



**Above,** mountains of dreams; the Main Range from the air.

the deep chasm of the Geehi River. These steep and forbidding slopes were a daunting sight to early skiers, but they held a mysterious attraction for the Mitchells and others such as Colin Wyatt who eventually pioneered them. It is for her exploration of these great western faces that Elyne Mitchell is best known—among skiers, at any rate.

Not until 1941 did she finally have the time, confidence and company to ski these untracked slopes. She was not the first, though. Her husband, Tom, had skied down into Lady Northcotes Canyon with George Day in 1934. They regained the tops up a gully that runs into the Canyon from below Carruthers Peak. They named it Little Austria because it reminded Tom of Arlberg. Even earlier, in 1898, employees of Wragge's Observatory (built on the summit of Mt Kosciusko) had been down the slopes of Mt Townsend, frantically chasing a ski which had been dropped, but they probably descended on foot. Although Elyne had skied some short runs off Mt Townsend previously, her first taste of real western faces skiing came when she and others, including Toddy Allen, went on an exploratory trip to the Watsons Crag area.

On a reconnaissance mission the group espied a narrow spur which starts

no name for this little peak so Elyne named it Sentinel Peak. After skiing these superb slopes, Elyne commented on the other runs to which she had been accustomed: 'Twynam no longer meant a long run...but the way home from skiing the "other side". Carruthers, too, had changed status in our eyes.'

Later, with friends Curly Annabel and Colin Wyatt, Elyne skied amongst the gullies and slopes of Watsons Crag. One particularly memorable run down the north-facing slope of Twynam West Spur finished way down in Watsons Gorge Creek—a vertical drop of about 700 metres. On the climb back up the enormous slope the group spotted a small, treeless hill, connected to Mt Anderson by a long spur. This little peak held a great attraction for Elyne.

The opportunity to ski down to its snowy summit came one sleepy morning when it looked as though the fine weather was about to turn for the worse. An exciting run down a staircase-like spur through snow gums and alpine ash led to a saddle and a small climb to the summit. Their eyes were the first to see the spectacular views from this place of the Craggs high above. Elyne named the hill Friars Alp.

Other exploratory trips took Elyne down Townsend Spur below Mt Alice Rawson, and on to other skiable ridges and gullies east of Mt Townsend as far



as Mts Twynam and Anderson. Once, while skiing with George Day down one of these steep slopes near Sentinel Peak, Elyne fell and began to slide. Memories of Molly Hill, a skier who perished on Mt Feathertop, came flooding into Elyne's mind as she continued to slide ever faster. Finally, she thrust her ski pole into the snow, discovering a primitive sort of self-arrest. George and Elyne finished the run



Above, Tom Mitchell in 1934, at the height of his ski-racing career. Joyce Beale

beneath Sentinel Peak and began to ponder its slopes. Some day, perhaps, she would return with Tom and ski these gullies. Elyne said, 'This second visit to my gully had seemed to lose nothing in repetition. The spirit of venture about the western face will never go.'

It might well be asked 'Where was Tom during these trips?' The Mitchells were both keen to explore the ridges and gullies visible from their home, but it was now wartime and Tom was already in Malaya, serving on the staff of General Gordon Bennett's AIF 8th Division. When, in December 1941, the Japanese entered the war and began to advance down the Malay Peninsula, Tom and Dr Ken Burnside were virtually the only officers with first-hand knowledge of the countryside. When Singapore fell in 1942, the 8th Division went into silence. Australia was in great danger. A year later, Elyne learned that Tom was a prisoner of war in Changi.

During the three and a half years till the end of the war in the Pacific in August 1945, she worked as a stockman on Towong Hill. The war had drained many resources from the country. Good men and machinery to help run the farm were hard to come by. On the numerous occasions when Elyne had to muster the cattle around the property, she became aware of the problem of erosion. She noticed how rabbits, weeds, and the clearing of trees on and around the farm had injured the soil, especially near streams and watercourses where it was easily washed away. Unable to make a significant contribution to its conservation (due to the shortage of materials and manpower during the war), Elyne decided to write a book, *Soil and Conservation*, which was published in 1946. During this time, there were occasional, wonderful camps in the mountains.

In Changi, meanwhile, to help lift morale amongst the prisoners, the Changi Ski Club was formed. Garry Veitch put the idea to Tom. Initially, he was uncertain whether they had enough skiers or people interested in skiing to form such a club. They went ahead, however, and the club was formed on 15 January 1943. Meetings were held once a week with Captain T W Mitchell in the chair. Tom returned to Towong Hill in 1945. In 1947, fully recovered from the weakened state brought on by his war experiences, he was elected as the Country Party member for Benambra, a position he was to hold until 1976.

For about 18 years up to 1960 Elyne had little time to spend on her mountains. During this period she gave birth to four children: Indi, Walter-Harry (Harry), Honor and John. To entertain her children (and herself) she wrote the 'Silver Brumby' series of children's books. In fact, both Tom and Elyne were prolific writers. Tom had published a book called *Ski Heil* in 1937 which covered Australian skiing history, equipment, downhill skiing and touring. In 1942 Elyne published her best-known book, *Australia's Alps*, probably the first to cover many and various summer and winter trips to the Snowy Mountains. As well, both regularly contributed articles to publications such as the *Australian and New Zealand Ski Year Books* of the late 1930s and 1940s. While Elyne did little skiing during these years, Tom continued to win events. These included, in 1948, three major races in New Zealand.

The late 1950s brought some opportunities to ski with a young family, and Elyne enjoyed some good days at Thredbo during its early years. The 1960s offered a lot more skiing and touring. Whilst 1960 and 1964 were both good snow seasons, Elyne questioned whether the snow now lasted as long as it had done earlier in the century. She wrote, 'Was the weather colder then?'

The 'greenhouse effect' and global warming were as yet unheard of.

The Mitchells' exploratory days were almost, but not entirely, over; Elyne, Michael Glavanax and Phyl Bruce were probably the first to ski down to the Leather Barrel Creek from the Rams Head Range. They still enjoyed many forays into the mountains. During the 1960s the whole family skied regularly, particularly in the Thredbo and Dead Horse Gap areas, which were both now accessible by road. They also visited the mountains in summer, not only for walking and horse-riding, but also for skiing—the many lingering snow drifts provided unsurpassed family fun for the Mitchells. Sadly for Elyne, 1965 was the last time that her skis were to carve up the slopes of the western faces, though she and her son John visited some of the open slopes above Little Austria on cross country skis during 1973.

The past two decades have not been kind to Elyne Mitchell. The deaths of her son Harry in 1972 and of Tom in 1984 have made life harder for her. When Tom passed away, a significant and important part of Australian skiing history went with him. Much of Elyne's time is now spent working on Towong Hill, which John manages, and writing books on her beloved Snowy Mountains—including *Discoverers of the Snowy Mountains* and *A Vision of the Snowy Mountains*, the latter published in 1988 and reviewed in *Wild* no 32.

Tom and Elyne Mitchell have accomplished so much—they have been true adventurers. Many walkers and skiers now follow in their footsteps and ski tracks, hoping for at least some of the thrill and excitement that the Mitchells experienced when they explored much of the Snowy Mountains—then unknown to all but the hardiest of outdoor enthusiasts.

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#### Acknowledgement

I would especially like to thank Elyne Mitchell for allowing me to quote from her books, supplying the photographs, offering suggestions and editing the text to make it as accurate and factual as possible. ▲

Glen van der Knijff, a keen cross country skier and alpine historian, regularly visits the high country of north-east Victoria. A qualified cartographer, he previously worked for local map and guidebook publisher Argona Publications before joining the Wild staff in 1988.



# THE GREAT DIVIDE

Separated in time by 75 years, the remarkable stories of Freda du Faur and Erica Beuzenberg have much more in common than their dramatic setting—the Southern Alps of New Zealand



# Freda du Faur

Eighty years ago, a young woman from Sydney stole a march on New Zealand's leading mountaineers. *Al Green* tells her story

▲ WITH THE PLANET'S GREATEST PEAKS now climbed many times, it is interesting to look back to a period early this century when the supply of mountains yet to be conquered must have seemed limitless. One of the most accomplished mountaineers of that time was a failed nurse from the flattest continent on earth—Australia. Her name was Freda du Faur and among her achievements was the first traverse, in 1913, of the three summits of Mt Cook (3,766 metres), New Zealand's highest peak.

Few women of that era could have matched such feats; nor were many men her equal in the mountains. Freda du Faur said that most people expected her to have short hair, a loud mouth and big feet. In fact this could hardly have been further from the truth: she took great care to maintain a feminine appearance, even on the toughest climbs. Slightly built and of a highly strung nature, Freda had trained to be a nurse but had been forced by nervous exhaustion to give up a nursing career. Hardly a likely candidate, one might think, for ascending alpine peaks deemed by the experts to be impossible to climb. Freda did just that, however, in four short seasons of climbing during the summers of 1909–13.

A clue to her later achievements may lie in Freda's childhood. As a girl, her love of the outdoors predominated over the trappings of an upper class existence. When she wasn't attending Sydney's very proper Church of England Girls' Grammar School, Freda rambled with only her dog for company through the unspoilt bush near her home—in what is now Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. She even taught herself to rockclimb without any of the equipment on which modern climbers rely. So perhaps it's not surprising that Freda later preferred the freedom of the mountains to any alternatives Sydney society had to offer.

The inspiration to climb the Southern Alps of New Zealand first came to Freda when she saw a photograph of Mt Cook during a visit to an exhibition in Christchurch. From there she undertook an uncomfortable three-day journey in order to see the mountains for herself. Mt Cook was about to become central to Freda's life.

Two years later she journeyed back there again and persuaded guide Peter Graham to give her instruction in

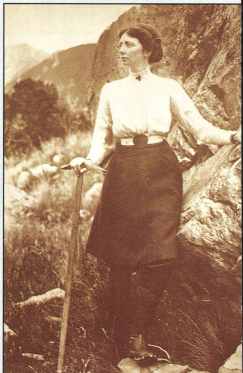
climbing. In the summer of 1909, at the age of 27, Freda pulled on climbing boots for the first time, presumably with no idea of just how outstanding a mountaineer she would become. The elderly tourists who frequented the Mt Cook Hotel during their summer sojourn disapproved thoroughly, and insisted on her taking along a porter as chaperon. She agreed, but promised to send them the bill for his services. On their first outing, Peter Graham likened her to a cat, such was her natural climbing ability.

Freda's ambition to climb Mt Cook, and to be the first woman to do so, was realized the following year, in 1910. She made the ascent in the record time of six hours. There are very few climbers today who could do that after only one season; and fewer still if forced to wear hobnailed boots and a long woollen skirt, and carry a primitive ice axe as their only climbing equipment.

Part of the reason for the speed of the ascent was the preparation Freda had undergone during the previous winter at the Sydney Institute of Physical Education. There she had completed an innovative programme of exercises aimed at developing strength and stamina appropriate to climbing; for a woman to do this must have seemed quite radical in the days of the gentleman climber.

The next season, 1911, did not begin well. By all accounts, Freda arrived at Mt Cook an emotional and physical wreck. Her father had been ill and she'd spent the winter nursing him. That year, climbing was for her a form of therapy, its effects becoming more apparent with each successful ascent. The more she climbed, the stronger Freda became until, at the end of the season, she ascended a previously unclimbed peak that now bears her name. Recovery was complete.

Mt Cook consists of three peaks linked by a treacherous ridge about 1.6 kilometres long. Before the summer of 1912–13, no one had ever traversed all three, and any attempt to do so would have been considered insane. Freda returned to Mt Cook, determined to achieve this feat. Many leading climbers questioned the merit of attempting such a hazardous traverse. By now, however, Freda knew that such criticism was to be expected and, as in the past, she simply ignored it. Guide Peter Graham, a man of few words, silenced the critics when



**Above:** then: Freda du Faur. Mt Cook National Park Service collection. **Right:** now: Erica Beuzenberg reaching the summit of Mt Cook after climbing the East Ridge, June 1989. This and all uncredited photos Gottlieb Braun-Elwert. **Previous page:** Erica Beuzenberg climbing on the ridge between Mt Magellan and Mt Teichelmann, Mt Cook National Park, June 1989.

he let them know that Freda was as good as any man with whom he'd climbed.

With two guides—led appropriately by Peter Graham—Freda completed the grand traverse on 4 January 1913. After a gruelling 20 hours on the mountain, the trio returned to warm beds and mountaineering eminence down the steep and hazardous Linda Glacier—known to today's climbers as 'the bowling alley' because of the lumps of ice that come flying down it. Freda's second guide, Darby Thompson, died in an avalanche on the Linda Glacier the following year, one of the earliest casualties on Mt Cook.

The first traverse had been a testing experience. On the razorback ridge linking the peaks, one slip would have meant plunging a thousand metres on to the Tasman Glacier. Freda had met her greatest challenge without flinching. It was a remarkable achievement. Today, with equipment and techniques unheard of in 1913, the grand traverse of Mt Cook still inspires respect.



# Sparks Fly Upward

Gottlieb Braun-Elwert chronicles a remarkable winter's climbing

Even with the plum of New Zealand climbing to their credit, the trio were not satisfied. After enduring a flood that swept away the Mt Cook Hotel, Freda and her two guides again set out. This time their aim was to complete the first traverse of Mt Sefton, a peak which dominates the range just south of Mt Cook—the South Island's 'great divide'. It is a difficult climb in the best of conditions. They completed it in a blizzard, lost their way after attaining the summit, and almost perished before finally descending the far side to the west coast. At times during this ordeal, Freda experienced the sensation that she was somehow outside herself, observing her frail body being blown flat by the power of the storm. For the first time she faced the very real possibility of dying in the mountains. In the light of what was to happen later in her life, she may have died a happier person had she not found a way off that mountain.

Mt Sefton was Freda's last climb anywhere. After living through the First World War in England, she returned to Australia. She lived first with relatives, later alone, and committed suicide in 1935.

Freda du Faur remains an enigma—a 'daughter of the establishment' with a sensitive temperament, who was also the boldest of mountaineers. Perhaps the very sensitivity which had been her downfall as a nurse helped when feeling for a way up through treacherous rock and ice; and, sensitive though she may have been, Freda was also incredibly determined. Just to begin an ascent of Mt Cook entailed a 20 kilometre approach on foot, fording dangerous glacial rivers and bivouacking under rock overhangs. By comparison, the modern climber can catch a ski plane on to the Grand Plateau immediately below Mt Cook and, once there, can live in comparative luxury in a well-equipped hut, with radio communication and weather reports laid on.

One thing, however, remains certain. Intentionally or not, by leading the field in what was then strictly a masculine pursuit, Freda du Faur advanced a great Australian tradition of disregard for the establishment. ▲



*I sincerely believe that the true mountaineer, like the poet, is born, not made. The details of their craft both of course must learn, but the overmastering love of the mountains is something which wells up from within and will not be denied. An unsympathetic environment and want of opportunity may keep this love hidden even from its possessor; but alter the environment and give the opportunity and the climber will climb as naturally as the sparks fly upward.*

Freda du Faur, *The Conquest of Mount Cook*, 1915.

▲ JULY 1980. TEMPLE BASIN SKI FIELD. Linwood High School's snow caving weekend with 14 students and two teachers. I clearly remember one girl who shovelled enthusiastically into the snow. The same student was known at school as a rebel and a trouble-maker. It was as though I had freed a prisoner. She bubbled over with energy, laughing and enjoying herself. Her name was Erica Beuzenberg. How on earth she then survived seven years in Christchurch drafting offices I do not know.

March 1989. I met Erica again when she came to be interviewed for a job. I

had advertised for a guide to assist with a programme of wilderness walking tours. Erica had recently returned from a three-week canoe trip around Fiordland's coastline, the first woman to have canoed this wild part of the world.

Already an accomplished skier and walker and a keen mountaineer, she was set to make the outdoors her livelihood. Not content with only the walking tours, she wanted to work as a ski and mountain guide as well. I could sense her determination, but she was a little short of sustained climbing experience. Still, I thought, anyone who could survive the elements of Fiordland—and tolerate the sandflies for so long—would be able to cope with the most difficult clients and the most adverse conditions on a mountain. The technical side of mountaineering can be learned.

Later, almost in jest, I suggested that during the coming winter we should attempt to climb all New Zealand's peaks of more than 3,000 metres. Besides being good training for Erica, it would be a first in New Zealand climbing history. I had often thought about climbing all the 3,000 metre peaks in a single winter, but just as often dismissed the idea as unrealistic. Winter climbing imposes

Al Green is a photographer who lives in Townsville. He is a keen Nordic skier, who ventured earlier this year from his usual stamping ground—the area between Kiandra and Mt Kosciuszko—to ski in the Sierras of the western USA.



severe restraints: daylight hours are few and temperatures low; deep snow necessitates the use of skis for access to the mountains; and rock is often covered by ice. One thing leads to another: ski travel is restricted to the daylight hours, for it is difficult at night to assess avalanche danger or to see crevasses—particularly when on the downhill run. Efficient route selection,



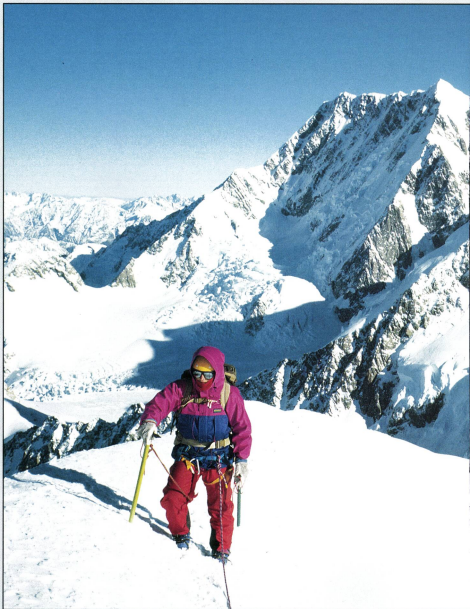
**Above,** Erica Beuzenberg. **Right,** Beuzenberg on Mt Haidinger, June 1989. Mt Cook behind, with the East Ridge on the left.

streamlined climbing technique and good skiing ability are essential. I was therefore surprised to hear Erica immediately ask when we would start climbing. Was this a sign of ignorance or of incredible energy? I decided it was the latter.

4–13 June. Ascents of Mts Haidinger, Lendenfeld and Tasman and the three peaks of Mt Haast during a period of unsettled weather provide an appropriate warm-up for frosty climbs to follow.

22 June. Midwinter. It is noon at Plateau Glacier, in amongst the big peaks. The forecast is for one more fine day. Erica's drive is infectious. She persuades me to tackle Mt Cook by the East Ridge. As we race across the glacier, my mind sorts out our options: a moonlit traverse of the 'big C'? A night high on the East Ridge? But where would we bivouac? We decide to climb and see. Elegant free climbing leads up this natural ladder into the sky. Five hours after leaving Plateau Hut we step into our cosy 'Caroline Hilton', a small crevasse out in the Caroline Face. Soon we have a stove going in the lounge. Our Hilton also has a veranda, a stupendous view and a 2,000 metre 'long drop'.

23 June. A routine like clockwork lets us race up the top section of the East Ridge to the summit ridge. It's great to



step out on to level ground again. A swift scramble across to the Low Peak and back again to the Middle Peak, and our stomachs tell us to have lunch; but there's no time for more than a muesli bar—and besides, it's too cold to sit down.

There is a fine balance to be struck in mountaineering between pushing each other to the limit and looking after each other. Only seconds after we tie in to the rope, a cornice gives way beneath my feet. Erica's belay saves me.

We reach the High Peak of Mt Cook at 3 pm. What a mountain! Erica is the first woman to climb the East Ridge in winter. With only two hours of daylight left, we race down the ice cap. Two abseils take us through the summit rocks and we reach the Linda Glacier as darkness falls, in thigh-deep snow and a maze of crevasses. We have no skis. They are waiting for us at Cinerama Col. We steamroller a way across the Grand Plateau to our hut.

'Dixon tomorrow, before the storm breaks?'

'I'm thirsty. Let's have a drink first.'

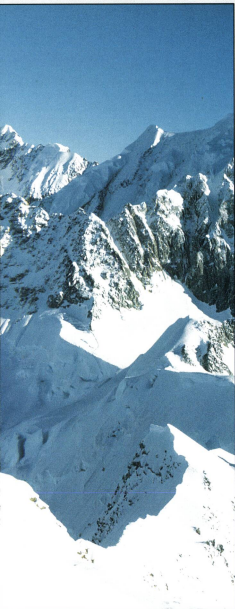
24 June. Sparks are still flying upwards. The standard route on Mt Dixon is more than we had bargained for. The 'schrund' is badly cut off, there is vertical ice as hard as concrete, and iced-up rock. Otherwise it's a piece of cake. Snow begins to fall as we arrive on the summit. We descend quickly, and avalanches soon follow. Back to Plateau Hut—home, sweet home! There's time to dry damp gear on a frame we improvise over the Primus.

25 June. A metre of snow has fallen overnight, but the sun comes through around midday. There's no excuse to be slack. We head for Cinerama Col to retrieve our skis. What a misery it becomes! Four hours wading through thigh-deep snow. The return on skis is a mere one-hour pleasure trip.

26 June. A 3 am start. Up the Linda again—the land of dreams and nightmares. Sunrise on Clarke Saddle.

'Erica, you're allowed to wake up.'

We hop over the summits of Mts Teichelmann and Graham to Silberhorn,



could have stayed up there after all. We haven't the energy to climb again today, and decide to go out—we'll leave Mt Dampier for later. Sixteen peaks down, thirteen to go.

17–22 July. A five-day climbing marathon in the Plateau area tests our stamina. We combine a guided ascent of Mt Cook with a new route on Mt Dampier, climbing on five consecutive days: climb to Plateau Hut; establish a route up the Linda; attempt Mt Cook and retreat; climb Dampier; climb Cook; ski out. Lack of sleep and continuous effort take their toll. Erica goes down with flu and becomes a miserable heap, unable even to speak. The sparks are scarcely glowing.

31 July–1 August. We attempt Mt Sefton in deteriorating weather. Erica has still not recovered fully.

18 August. A free weekend of fine weather between two weeks of guiding must not be missed. A midday start from Mt Cook village, up again to our 'wee biv' on the way to Sefton.

19 August. A 3 am start over terrain familiar even in torchlight, plugging steps in deep snow to Tuckett Col for the sunrise. A thick cover of sastrugi holds the East Ridge together; its first section is aptly likened to 'vertical Weet-bix'. After that, it's good to be on firm ice. The

rope comes off and the sparks are flying. We choose the left-hand gully in the East Face and spiral up the western slopes to the twin summits of Sefton. We are jubilant. The climbing is great, amongst the most beautiful mountains in the world. We return the same way and are in Mt Cook by evening.

30 August. Eleven mountains remain, and there are 22 days left before the spring equinox. The race is on. We are in Kelman Hut at Tasman Saddle.

31 August. Light snow and wind all night result in a late start. It's 8.30 am before we set off for Elie de Beaumont. The southerly is still pushing up the Tasman Glacier and we ski into and out of the fog many times. The Anna Glacier with its riddle of crevasses tests our route-finding skills. Midday finds us on the High Peak. Without delay we continue to the West Peak while southerly clouds swirl continuously over the ridge. We bounce back to our skis and wait down the Anna, jumping many crevasses *en route*. Kelman Hut appears in the last daylight. After ten and a half hours on the beat, out comes a muesli bar.

1 September. To sustain the sparks we must avoid burning ourselves out. We decide therefore to climb Malte Brun from a high bivouac rather than in a

back over Graham and Teichelmann, and on to Magellan. An inconspicuous offshoot out on the west of the Main Divide, sandwiched between the Balfour Face of Mt Hicks, Mt Magellan is connected to the divide by an elegant ridge. This is climbing at its best. The evening sun over the Tasman Sea adds its magic. We return over Teichelmann to our bivouac at Clarke Saddle. Brrrr! Someone forgot to shut the door.

27 June. A day of mixed climbing and slow progress. Malaspina proves to be a nutcracker; its frosty teeth nip at my fingers. Four peaks, up and down, belaying, abseiling, traversing. Mt Vancouver at last. It's 3 pm, too late to continue on to Dampier. A front is approaching and the forecast is for a southerly. Do we risk a bivouac on our emergency rations? We decide to be cautious, and return to our ski depot, then on down the Linda to our refuge by 5 pm.

28 June. Another fine day! The southerly went up the coast and we

## New Zealand Alps





single day from Kelman. We sleep in and enjoy a leisurely breakfast, followed by a comfortable cruise down the Tasman to Darwin Corner, where we dump surplus gear and food. We branch off up the Darwin Glacier, sidle round the first ice fall of the Bonney Glacier and dodge crevasses at the second. The 'schrund' at the bottom of Fyfe's Couloir provides

pleasant stroll over to Douglas. Afternoon at Pioneer. We call it a day.

5 September. After another noisy night, our goal is Mt Torres, a mountain with a big question mark: shall we be able to get through all those crevasses, climb it, and still be back by evening? We are lucky. We sniff our way through the maze of the Abel Jansen Glacier and in

chances of climbing the South Face of Mt Hicks; we are hopelessly behind schedule. The Curtain Route is in bright sunlight and looks more like a shower-curtain—a shower of rocks. The only way that remains is a new route on the West Face, which gives 'hard severe' rockclimbing. On top of Hicks at 3 pm, we see westerly cloud formations. The descent becomes a race against time. Last daylight at Harper Saddle—we take time to absorb the unforgettable view of the coast—then down into a blackout. It's a relief to reach Empress Hut—so close, yet so hard to find. The sparks need fuel. One more mountain.

14 September. A westerly is moving in. It's the sort of day you'd normally spend in the pit. We take a line to the east of the divide; belay a pitch; climb up; drop down to the west; climb up again to the divide and follow it to the top of Mt La Perouse. It's blowing, a white-out.

*We were within a few feet of the top. They sent me on alone the length of the rope. I gained the summit and waited for them, feeling very little, very lonely, and much inclined to cry.* Freda du Faur.

I pause and let Erica lead the final few steps to the summit. She laughs: 'You only wanted me to fall into the slot first.' True, there was a little crevasse next to the summit.

We are too concerned at the late hour and the deteriorating weather to allow elation to set in. We have to sprint to get out of here. Our tracks are gone and headlamps are no use in fog at night. It's amazing what reserves one can mobilize when time is short. We barely make it back to Empress Hut, muesli bars still waiting in our parka pockets. I fall on to a bunk, too tired to do anything. Incredibly, Erica still has a smile on her face. She passes me a cup of tea.

15 September. The nor'wester season has set in. Slowly we realize that there are no more 3,000 metre mountains left to climb. A certain emptiness replaces the sense of anticipation we had enjoyed; but as we plough down the Hooker Glacier, yo-yo into and out of countless hidden crevasses, enjoy morning tea at Gardiner Hut and a drink from a stream, we feel privileged to have been able to climb all those wonderful mountains and live amongst them.

*All the dreams and plans that had filled my days with speculations and excitement were over, the 'glory and the dream' had passed into prosaic reality... Gradually, however, the haunting feeling of loss evaporated. Serene and aloof, the great mountain dominated the valley, unaltered and unalterable, no matter how many defiling feet might touch its white snows.* Freda du Faur. ▲



**Above.** Beuzenberg on the summit of Mt Dampier, July 1989.

us with another spacious hostel. Laundry comes out and sun cream goes on.

2 September. We start at sunrise up Fyfe's Couloir—the 'chicken run' up Malte Brun. First deep powder, then firm ice; two hours up, one down. Down the Bonney and Darwin for lunch at the corner, where we bask in the sun. We set off reluctantly down the Tasman for De la Beche Hut. Tomorrow will be hard.

3 September. Dawn. Crotch-deep snow on the steepening slope up to De la Beche Ridge. Steep traverses on skis follow, awfully exposed. The Ranfurly Glacier is a mess. Flat, easy ground at last on the plateau of the Minarets. The twin peaks are a cruise. We descend steeply to the névé of the Franz Josef Glacier, don skis and try to avoid those nasty slots. There is a hollow 'woomph!', a shriek, a wriggle, and Erica is smiling again; that was a little too close for comfort. Newton Pass at last and a magnificent sunset, then once more down and up, to Pioneer Hut. How tired we are! Nothing that a cup of tea can't fix, though.

4 September. We are somewhat sleepy after a noisy night, with climbers coming and going at all hours. Steep zig-zags lead up Glacier Peak and a

no time reach the East Face of Torres. Up the right-hand gully and on to the North Ridge—a classic of New Zealand mountaineering. Number 26; we are getting close.

6 September. Crowded huts, kerosene fumes and nightly clatter are not our scene. Outside, we enjoy our newly won freedom and stride up towards Pioneer Pass. The descent into the Tasman valley is a mixed bag: steep traverses, big ice blocks strewn across our path, down-climbing, a 40 metre abseil and very steep skiing in deep powder—just the right finish. Home to Lake Tekapo for a shower and a feed, then we pack for Mt Aspiring and get a decent night's sleep.

8 September. Through Wanaka and on to Aspiring Hut in the West Matukituki valley; up to French Ridge Hut. It is great to wander through beech forest again after all that snow.

9 September. Up French Ridge and across the Breakaway. Sunrise on the Bonar Glacier, and there is Aspiring with its head already in the clouds. The nor'wester season is not far off. The South-west Ridge proves easy. There's no view from the top. We rattle across the Bonar and ski between towers of ice to the hut. Two peaks to go.

13 September. The long slog up the Hooker Glacier without skis ruins our

Gottlieb Braun-Eliwer was born and educated in Germany, and migrated to New Zealand in 1978. He now lives in Lake Tekapo. He has 29 years of mountaineering experience, 19 years as a professional guide, and nine years running Alpine Recreation Canterbury Ltd, which he established with his wife, Anne.



# Cape York Peninsula

**Track Notes**

Few tracks but possibilities a-plenty in the far northern wilderness;  
an introduction by *Ian Brown*



▲ I SAT DOWN WITH HEAVY FOREBODING TO compose a review of bushwalking opportunities on Cape York. As someone who has always regarded 'walk-by-numbers' route guides as second only to 'big bucks' as a danger to pristine wilderness, I had to justify it to myself. What would my purist friends say? The answer was simple: big bucks are moving in on the cape, and if the 'people of the little tents' don't stake their claim on the place along with everyone else, much will be lost.

Cape York Peninsula is a region a little smaller than Victoria. It has varied terrain, unique vegetation and wildlife, much spectacular country, some of the biggest and best wilderness on the continent and excellent opportunities for extended walks, yet very few people go there specifically for bushwalking. Cape York faces a total take-over by four-wheel-drive tourism, tourist resorts, space bases and so on. The history of conservation has shown time and again that beautiful places receive protection from such a fate only when enough people are sufficiently in love with them to oppose the pressure to develop; Cape York needs a few more lovers and a lot more fighters.

For the capable and adventurous bushwalker, Cape York is one of the last frontiers—a place where you can 'stick your neck out' a long way from home, do something that may never have been done before, get lost, find yourself again, and be constantly

surprised. May it ever be so! I hope I won't give the game away, make it too easy or take all the fun out of it. If you're interested in walking on Cape York Peninsula, this article may give you a few ideas and help you avoid a few pitfalls; the rest is up to you.

**Weather.** Northern Cape York Peninsula, at a latitude of only 11–14° south of the equator, has a warm monsoonal climate. The wet season lasts from about November to April. Torrential rain is common, cyclones are a possibility, swamps fill up and rivers become major obstacles, but life is rampant and 'the Wet' offers some peculiar delights. The early dry season from about May to August is probably the most benign period for lugging packs about the place. There will still be showers and some heavy rain on the east coast and ranges—more so early on, as the Wet tails off. South-easterly trade winds buffet the area relentlessly almost every day, and on the coast are strong enough to 'blow a dog off a chain'. Consequently, showers soon pass and mosquitoes are kept at bay. Temperatures do not usually rise above 30°C, and drop by about 10° at night. The days are hotter and the nights colder the further inland one goes. As 'the Dry' progresses, the wind eases off, and before the Wet begins, the weather is typically calm, clear and hot.

**Water.** The higher mountain areas and the east coast are watered pretty well, even in the late Dry. With careful planning you should be

**Above,** spectacular creek country in the Janet Ranges. Both photos Ian Brown

able to find water every night. Inland, around the sandstone tablelands, water might be a problem at any time in the Dry, depending on how big the Wet has been and how long its 'tail' has run into the Dry.

**Nasties.** There's always a down side.

Salt water crocodiles are common, both on the coast and a good distance up the major creeks, and are bigger every year. There are many large crocs in the Jardine more than 100 kilometres from its mouth—within 10 kilometres of the divide. Once one understands their habits, crocodiles can usually be avoided. On land, even big ones generally run the other way, but it is not a good idea to swim in large creeks or rivers (unless above a waterfall) or to sleep or linger close to river banks or on the beach. Read up on crocs—and take care!

Wild pigs are also common, but unless accidentally cornered or otherwise threatened, they'll usually show you their bums.

Wild bulls will often not get out of the way and some old farmers fear bulls more than any other Cape York animal. They are commonly encountered on the open plains, especially west of the divide. They are territorial animals and may come running when they hear you. Keep a stout tree in the corner of your eye and

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one hand on your waist-belt, ready to ditch your rucksack. Once comfortable in the tree, yell abuse until the beasts get bored and go away.

Snakes are as common here as anywhere else, and many are large taipans. Gaiters are worth wearing, but the best protection is a well-peeled pair of eyes.

Wasps have large nests at head height in some of the dry woodland country, and any disturbance will trigger an aggressive response. They really pack a wallop, but the pain doesn't last long—though one in the eye would be nasty.

Leeches will be rampant in rain forest whenever it is wet.

Mozzies are everywhere during the dry season but are seldom a problem. The Wet is another story!

The most insidious and worrying of the Cape York 'bities' is a small mite which dwells in the rain forest and transmits scrub typhus, a potentially fatal disease. Application of the chemical di-butyl phthalate to boots and clothes will repel the beast, it is alleged; wearing long clothes and not sitting down in the rain forest are also supposed to help, but make your own enquiries. If you are unfortunate enough to come down with scrub typhus when a long way from help, it may respond to antibiotic treatment. Consult your doctor before you go.

Stinging trees are common in the rain forest. Learn to recognize them.

Remember: you are in the tropics, and germs and infections thrive here. Avoid even minor scratches as far as possible and keep all wounds clean.

**Equipment.** In the friendly climate of the Dry you don't need much. A tent is essential only in the mountains, but it can make rainy nights on the windswept coast a lot more comfortable. Shelter from insects is important—either a netted tent, separate mozzie net or bivvy bag. Sleeping bags can be left down south. I've always managed with a cotton inner sheet, Gore-Tex bivvy bag and light jumper (mostly used as a pillow!). A light, cheap parka might be useful, but only rarely. In the rain forest you'll get wet through anyway and there's no chilling wind under the canopy.

Light forms of footwear such as sandshoes are ideal for most terrain, as long as you're used to wearing them. For the wet, slippery rain forest I'd recommend good, light boots, especially if carrying a large pack. For the 'impenetrable' sections, light secateurs can be used to snip through the lawyer vines (*Calamus* spp.), but destruction on a larger scale is a waste of precious energy. A machete is unnecessary and all but useless anyway—except for opening coconuts.

Long (cotton) clothing, sturdy leather gloves, and gaiters are very useful in the scrub, as are stockings or panthoses (make mine black), against leeches. If you're in the dunes or on the coast, sunglasses, hats and sun screen lotions are handy. A stove could save a lot of trouble in the forest, and is preferable to lighting fires in the immaculate dunes. Take great care with fires at all times; the drier parts of the cape have been ravaged enough.

**Maps.** 1:100,000 scale maps from Auslig cover the whole region. Be warned that in

areas covered by rain forest, the topography and drainage indicated are not reliable. 1:250,000 maps are also available and might be handy for trip planning.

**Right of access.** The maps show National Park boundaries. The rest of the cape, except for a few small areas, is either Aboriginal Council land or under pastoral lease. The Department of Forestry 1:500,000 *Far North Queensland* map is a good reference for land

could simply start walking from the airstrip. Several charter companies will take you just about anywhere there's a strip, but this is expensive even if you fill the plane with people. There is lots of scope for using your initiative in creating or seeking out transport. Many vehicles travel 'the Track' all through the Dry; you might be able to link in with a commercial tour—or even hitch! The mail plane might be worth a try, too. Good luck.



**Above,** no place for the agoraphobic—plains north of the McIlwraith Range.

tenure, and the Lands Department in Cairns can provide names of lessees. Permission should be sought to enter any pastoral lease, and courtesy demands that you notify any Aboriginal Council whose land you wish to traverse. Camping permits are now required for all Queensland National Parks—yes, even for wilderness bushwalking!

**Transport.** As far as I know, there are no walking tracks on the cape. There are three main roads: the ominously named Peninsula Developmental Road, which leads to Cape York itself; and its two offshoots—to Weipa, and Lockhart River.

Getting there and back again is probably the greatest obstacle to bushwalking on Cape York. This is 'four-wheel-drive heaven', but don't be put off; conventional vehicles can usually be driven to Coen and even Weipa at any time between the early Dry and the start of the Wet—but don't get caught! Coen is 593 slow kilometres from Cairns by the Peninsula Road. To get anywhere else requires four-wheel-drive and is possible in the dry season only. There is a popular four-wheel-drive track through 'Heathlands' ranger station to Captain Billys Landing on the east coast, and many other obscure tracks on grazing properties, where special permission would be necessary. Some of these are useful walking access routes.

Apart from a multi-day boat tour to Thursday Island and a connecting ferry to Bamaga, sea transport is non-existent. Air travel is very practical, if a little expensive, as all the major centres including Weipa, Bamaga, Coen and Lockhart River have regular commercial services from Cairns. At Lockhart, for one, you

Bushwalking on Cape York is a fairly serious undertaking and all parties should be thoroughly competent and self-reliant, and love remoteness. If you were to get into serious trouble, the assistance to be expected from the few local police and others would be limited and, understandably, grudging.

The most varied, rugged and well-watered part of the peninsula lies to the east of the main north-south road that bisects the cape, and north of the small town of Coen. This region offers perhaps most scope for walkers. It is also the area I know best. Listed on the Register of the National Estate, it is threatened by a proposed spaceport, mining, tourism and freeholding (see *Wild* no 37).

**Mountainous rain forest.** The Great Dividing Range persists in northern Queensland as a string of low mountains in the middle of north-eastern Cape York. On the western side these slope away to the vast gulf plains and on the east, to the narrower coastal plain. Between Coen and the Pascoe River, the mountains are at their highest and support rain forest on granitic, metamorphic and volcanic rocks. In the south the McIlwraith Range rises to just over 800 metres; it is a broad, dissected plateau of granite, bounded on both sides by steep escarpments where well-fed streams carve gorges and drop over waterfalls to the plains. Pure rain forest clothes the eastern scarp and crest but relents to drier forest on the west. This is one of the largest intact rain forests in Australia, about 350 square kilometres in area.





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Left: la Robusta Ultralight.  
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vibram sole, bellows tongue, Blake  
sewn. Walking, trekking, casual.  
Sizes: 36-47, Wt: 1.1 kg.

Right: la Robusta Explorer.  
Lightweight, leather, new vibram  
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GE0 INT 02



OUTDOOR SHOPS RUN BY OUTDOOR PEOPLE

Walking is difficult here. Views are scarce, navigation tricky and progress very slow, but occasional granite boulders poke through the canopy and it is possible to crawl out and absorb the vista of ridge after ridge of tropical rain forest; hoop pines stand out against threatening rain squalls. Tree-climbing ability is very useful. The creeks are beautiful, and sometimes provide easier routes than the complex ridge tops, but be prepared for bewilderment in either case. Rain forest on Cape York tends to be low and scrubby and, wherever you go, there will be plenty of the dreaded lawyer vine. This is a climbing palm with long streamers of hooked barbs, which flail about, I swear, to ensnare the hapless traveller. Lawyer vine is one of the nastiest botanical items around, yet one can't help loving it.

The plains west of the range should not be dismissed. Wonderful, big creeks flow through galleries of tall rain forest that are open at ground level.

Northwards from the McIlwraith Range runs a nondescript complex of lower hills and ranges—still bearing quite a bit of rain

forest—which link up with the Table and Tozer Ranges inland from the Aboriginal settlement at Lockhart River. The walk to the summit of Mt Tozer (545 metres) is one of the most popular on the cape. Rising prominently above the road into Lockhart River, Tozer makes a good objective for a day walk.

The lowland rain forests of Iron Range National Park around Lockhart River and Portland Roads settlements have much to offer the bushwalking naturalist. This area is the Australian stronghold of some unusual wildlife, including the spectacular eclectus parrot.

Further inland are the Janet Ranges, a tumbled, barren expanse of rhyolite hills covered mostly in low heath. The larger creeks are magnificent, with bronze, polished rocks, waterfalls and big pools. When it howls with wind and rain, however, this area is alarmingly bleak—the only place on Cape York where I've felt the need for a parka whilst on the move.

**Sandstone country.** The big sweep of the Pascoe River marks the northern end of mountainous terrain and extensive rain forests.

The Great Dividing Range continues northwards from the Pascoe as a chain of low sandstone tablelands. Up to 300 metres in altitude at first, they fall gradually towards the Jardine country. Their open forests, much affected by fire, are relieved by patches of rain forest in gullies and on slopes sheltered by the low cliffs. These dissected tablelands can be pleasant and offer expansive views, but they lack the impact of other areas.

The Jardine River catchment is a high-quality wilderness of low topography, supporting heath, open forests, rain forests and swamps. Early white explorers called it the 'wet desert', and found the going very hard with their horses because of the soft, wet ground and lack of feed. For the modern wilderness pedestrian, access is generally straightforward. There isn't a great deal to see apart from the river and its tributaries, which are delightful (and full of crocodiles).

**Dunes.** Between the sandstone tablelands and the coast at Cape Grenville there is a very special landscape. The Shelburne Bay (Olive River) dune field is perhaps the most famed of the peninsula's wilderness treasures and has a well-deserved reputation for stunning scenery. Hundreds of dark tannic lakes are cradled amongst the white dunes, whose main mass covers about 400 square kilometres. A narrow belt of similar country runs up the coast towards the Jardine. It's not all bare sand; vegetation ranges from tall shrubs to very dense heaths, swamps and (of course) patches of rain forest. There is no obvious pattern of drainage, and an understanding of the 'grain' of the country—and judicious wading—will aid progress. Navigation is still rather hit-and-miss. Camping is easy if you don't mind the wind, and water is plentiful.

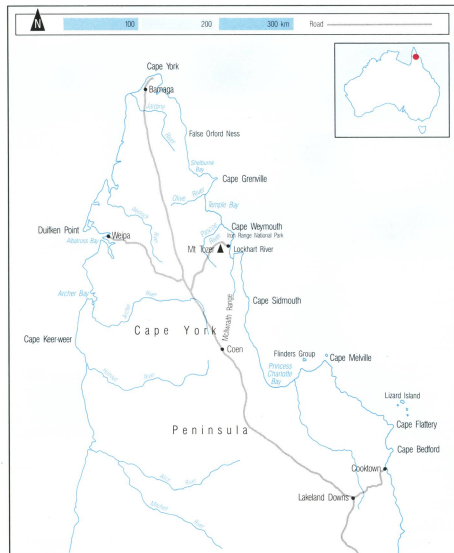
**Coast.** Where can I begin? The coast from Princess Charlotte Bay to the tip of the cape is equal in length to that between Melbourne and the New South Wales border, and just as varied. As far north as Temple Bay, the coast is fairly rugged, with steep ranges close by. The stretch from Temple Bay to Orford Bay is mostly dune country, interrupted by occasional headlands, whilst north of Orford Bay, low bauxite plateaux fall in many-hued cliffs to the Coral Sea until the huge mangrove estuary of Newcastle Bay is reached.

Most of the coast is negotiable, the main obstacles being the rivers, larger creeks and mangrove bays—and crocodiles! Some mangrove areas can be outflanked (with great care!) on the flats at low tide. Even the long, dune-backed beaches that stretch to the horizon provide interesting walking; there are palms, creeks and the flotsam from the Great Barrier Reef and its boats to poke around in. There's also a chance you'll see a dingo, or a big 'saltie' cruising offshore. Crocs may also be seen on the beach. This is one of the great wilderness coastlines.

I'd prefer not to say any more. There's a lot of really good walking on Cape York. If you get up there quickly you'll either be one of the last to see it before it goes under to 'development', or be just in time to help to preserve it for the future. ▲

Ian Brown (see Contributors in *Wild no 28*) has been bushwalking, climbing, skiing and paddling for about 18 years. His other loves are photography and his wife and young son, and his work in National Park management.

## Cape York Peninsula



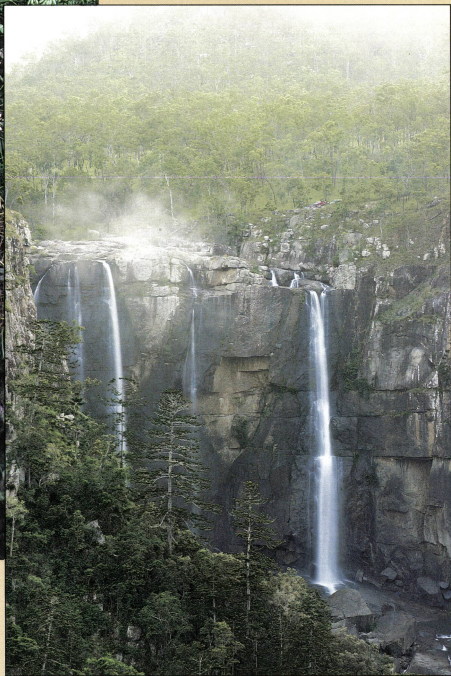


*Paul Curtis*





*Left, in the Paluma Range, near Townsville. Below, Blencoe Falls, near Ingham. All photos were taken in Queensland.*









**Above,** Bellenden Ker  
National Park rain forest  
canopy.

**Left,** sunset, Cleveland  
Bay.



# AJAYS FIT BOOTS WILD TOLD YOU

See WALKING BOOT SURVEY WILD no 28 1988 pages 61-5

While conducting this survey, I noticed distinct differences between shops. Ajay's Snow Country Sports at Heathmont in Melbourne took a particularly thorough line. Staff measure customers' feet with a sizing gauge, which I hadn't seen since being fitted for school shoes. Once this is done, they make a visual assessment, and are then able to recommend particular boots which would fit the customer well. In fact, they are so confident of their fitting, they offer a 'money back-fit guarantee'.

Unfortunately, not all shops are so progressive. I couldn't help but wonder whether something as difficult as matching feet to boots should be left in the hands of untrained shop staff.

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# Bushwalking Boots

**Wild Gear Survey**

Follow *Phil Carter's* advice, and don't let *them* walk all over you

▲ WRITE A BOOT SURVEY FOR WILD? SURE! How flattering! I've given it a great deal of thought since that initial moment of weakness, and now I think my feelings can be summed up with one question: 'Have you ever met a duck that enjoyed the opening of duck season?' (*We've never met one that told us it didn't, either, Phil, but we get the message.* Editor.) Controversial? Sure is.

At the outset let me say that the fitting and selection of boots is part science, part art and part patience. The whole field is too complex to put in a couple of pages of print, so here you get a condensed version, slanted to help you buy footwear for outdoor pursuits with a decreased chance of pain and suffering on future trips. The one-sentence summary is as follows: buy the boots that fit your feet best, as long as the design of the boots suits the kinds of trips you'll be doing. Too simple, you say? Fine. This suggests that, for you, one pair of boots may not be enough. A trip round Wilsons Promontory does not demand as much of your footwear as two weeks' bog trotting in South-west Tasmania.

Each person's expectations are different. Some don't feel they need a great deal of ankle support; others feel great wearing calipers half-way to their knees. This individual expectation is very important. If you trip over on footpaths, you'll need lots of protection for more rugged terrain. On the other hand, Captain Lentil, the hero of the South-west, may quite happily run the Western Arthurs in massage sandals.

This difference in needs and expectations makes the selection of a pair of boots a more individual business than buying a rucksack or a tent, for example. The shape of the last is the single most important factor in the equation. The heavier and harder the boots, the more this matters. The new wave of Cambrelle-lined, multi-piece-upper boots brings a host of benefits. They generally wear in with very little trauma; most are lighter than full-leather boots; and, while they may not be as weatherproof, they're much faster to dry. Many people believe these benefits outweigh any disadvantages when compared with sturdier and probably longer-wearing leather boots. Each person is entitled to make his or her own decision. It's not a case of right or wrong, it's a case of which qualities in a pair of boots are most important to you, who must wear them. Technical information is of some use here. It helps you gauge length of life and other characteristics to be expected from a particular boot.

It's my unpopular belief that waterproofness is relatively unimportant. If you plan to walk somewhere dry and not too rugged, very light uppers with adequate support underneath the foot are probably the best answer. If you are headed somewhere wet and swampy to experience the joys of a week of continuous



**Above,** with the right boots you can go anywhere. (*Wonder Wire Walkers, Tasman Glacier, New Zealand.*) Grant Dixon

drizzle, nothing is going to keep your feet dry; and whilst damp feet won't hurt you, boots that don't fit your foot type probably will. Far better to be pain-free in wet boots than to have feet that are dry but with oozing blisters. You will probably want to obtain as many features as possible in the one pair of boots—including

waterproofness—but the one thing on which you should not compromise is fit. Buy the ones whose last shape best suits the shape of your foot.

On the question of where to buy boots, I find myself in a moral dilemma. (I can't say what the last *Wild* walking boots survey said, even if I agree with it.) However, a few principles apply wherever you choose to shop. It takes staff a great deal of time and effort to become



# Attak

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Scarpa has long been considered Italy's leading manufacturer of walking and climbing footwear. In 1988 Scarpa released the *Attak* range of walking boots, a development of, and successor to, the Trionic story. All *Attak* boots are crafted from very special materials, reflecting Scarpa's 50 years of experience and uncompromising attitude to production. The choice of models for the 1990 range of *Attak* footwear will provide unmatched quality, performance and comfort in the harshest Australian conditions.

Consider the benefits of the *Attak* range

- Hand-selected 2.5 and 3 millimetre leathers provide unmatched quality and durability.
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- The *Attak* sole resists clogging whilst ensuring stable, secure traction. **Scarpa exclusive**.
- The *Attak* 'safety grip heel' is strategically and aggressively angled to allow for a positive grip while descending. **Scarpa exclusive**.

- *Attak* 'sprung last'. The upward curvature or 'toe spring' of the sole contributes to an efficient rolling stride and therefore reduces the risk of heel slip and blisters. **Scarpa exclusive**.
- 'Comfort-flex' pre-contoured nylon mid-soles are size graded to achieve the correct flex. The result is efficient and comfortable walking and protection against bruising and fatigue. The mid-sole will not distort with age or use. **Scarpa exclusive**.
- The *Attak* range offers three width fittings: wide, standard and ladies. **Scarpa exclusive**.
- Uppers are Blake stitched and tacked to the mid-sole. This is the strongest and most reliable construction method.
- Full Cambrelle linings (except sole) are strong, soft, absorbent and fast drying.
- All major seams are double and triple sewn.

Scarpa's philosophy has never changed. It includes a commitment to the artisans of the past and to the pleasures of unhurried production.



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Models, left to right:  
SL, Trek, Attak Shoe



competent boot fitters. They must learn to measure feet accurately in order to understand the shape of feet in relation to the shape of boots. There is far more to it than 'Is it long enough?' or 'Is it wide enough in the front?'. Then there is the problem of foot types, and how a foot deforms in use. Is the foot's structure mobile or rigid? What effect will a boot have on a particular foot type? This is not

the place to attempt to educate everyone to be boot fitters. There are, however, degrees of skill in fitting boots, and the best thing you can do for your feet is take them to a place where you know you will get the best service. Armed with a survey of walking boots, you may be tempted to go to your nearest stockist and say, for example, 'I want a pair of Glossy Bog Stompers'. Ideally, however, a fitter will ask

questions concerning the use you intend for your boots and any expectations you may have of their performance. He or she may then suggest that a pair of, say, Wombat Hill Bounders would offer the best match of last shape to foot shape and performance to intended use. After due consideration of feel and fit and a quick glance at the price tag, you may decide to buy them, or to try another

## Wild Gear Survey Bushwalking Boots

	Use	Weight, kilograms, pair size 7/41	Height, centimetres, size 7/41	Construction	Shank/stiffener	Outer pieces, material(s)	Lining	Lacing	Tongue	Size range	Approx price, \$	
<b>Asolo Italy</b>	Supercout	Light/medium	1.2	15	Inside stitched, cement bonded	Steel/nylon	2, Lovat 2, suede	Loden	D-rings, hooks	Padded, full gusset	3-13	210
<b>Bundstone Australia</b>	Hiker	Medium	1.3	13	Outside stitch-down	Wood	3, leather	None	D-rings, hooks	No padding, full gusset	4-13	85
<b>Burnip Australia</b>	Kimberley	Light	1.3	12	Outside stitch-down	Steel	3, leather	None	Eyebells, hooks	No padding, full gusset	34-48	130
	Boging	Medium	1.3	14	Inside stitched, cement bonded	Steel	1, leather	Leather	D-rings, hooks	Padded, full gusset	36-48	200
	Flinders	Medium/heavy	1.6	14	Inside stitched, lai-stitch	Steel	As above	Leather	As above	As above	36-48	230
<b>Dorotome Italy</b>	Montello	Light	1.0	9	Cement bonded	None	1, suede	Suede	D-rings, hooks	Padded, full gusset	30-48	160
	Kansas	Light/medium	1.2	19	As above	Steel	2, PU-coated leather/suede	Cambrelle	As above	As above	36-46	240
<b>Hi-Tec Korea</b>	Sierra Lite	Light	0.9	15	Cement bonded	Steel	Several, Cordura/suede	Cambrelle	D-rings, hooks	Padded, 1/2 gusset	4-8	95
	PCT	Light	0.95	16	As above	Steel	As above	Cambrelle	As above	As above	7-13	105
<b>Kathmandu Italy</b>	Montana	Medium	1.4	14	Inside stitched, cement bonded	na	Several, Cordura/suede	Cambrelle, leather	D-rings, hooks	Padded, 1/2 gusset	36-47	140
	Gore-Tex Trek	Medium	1.5	14	As above	Nylon	1, leather	Cambrelle, Gore-Tex	As above	Padded, full gusset	37-46	219
	Trek	Medium/heavy	1.7	14	Outside stitch-down	na	As above	Leather, suede	As above	As above	36-48	180
<b>La Robusta Italy</b>	Ultralight	Light	1.4	17	Inside stitched, cement bonded	Nylon	Several, Cordura/leather	Cambrelle	D-rings, hooks	Padded, full gusset	35-48	139
	Explorer	Light/medium	1.6	17	As above	Nylon	1, leather	Leather, suede	As above	No padding, full gusset	35-48	179
<b>La Sportiva Italy</b>	Dakota	Light/medium	1.4	18.5	Cement bonded	Nylon	Several, Cordura/suede	Cambrelle, Laspotes	D-rings, hooks	Padded, 1/2 gusset	39-46	179
	Patagonia	Light/medium	1.4	21	As above	Nylon	Several, leather/suede	Cambrelle, Gore-Tex	As above	Padded, 1/2 gusset	37-46	296
	Ontario	Medium/heavy	1.6	18.5	Stapled, cement bonded	Nylon	1, leather	Cambrelle	As above	Padded, full gusset	39-46	219
<b>Merrill Korea</b>	Trail	Light	0.85	11.5	Cement bonded	na	Several, leather/suede/nylon	Cambrelle	D-rings, hooks	Padded, 1/2 gusset	5-10 women 7-14 men	115
	Eagle/Laser/Quest	Light	1.0	15.5	As above	na	Several, Cordura/suede	Cambrelle	As above	As above	As above	140
	Explorer	Medium	1.4	19	As above	na	Several, leather	Cambrelle	As above	Padded, full gusset	As above	230
<b>Montellano Italy</b>	Kimberley	Medium/heavy	1.6	17	Inside stitched, cement bonded	Nylon	1, leather	Cambrelle	D-rings, hooks	Padded, full gusset	4-13	219
<b>Rossell Australia</b>	Scrub	Light	1.2	12	Outside stitch-down	Steel	3, leather	Linen toe	Eyebells	No padding, 1/2 gusset	3-12	85
	Hawk	Light/medium	1.4	13	As above	Steel	As above	Suede heel, linen toe	Eyebells, hooks	Padded, no gusset	3-12	110
	Falcon	Medium	1.6	12	As above	Steel	1, leather	Suede	Eyebells	Padded, 1/2 gusset	3-12	125
	Eagle	Medium/heavy	1.6	18	As above	Steel	3, leather	Suede heel, linen toe	Eyebells, hooks	Padded, full gusset	5-12	140
<b>Scarpa Italy</b>	Lady Trek/Trek	Medium	1.5	14	Inside stitched, cement bonded	Nylon sheet	1, leather	Cambrelle	D-rings, hooks	Padded, full gusset	36-42 women 39-47 men	219
	Elite	Medium	1.7	14	As above	As above	As above	Cambrelle, Gore-Tex	As above	As above	38-47 men	329
	SL Atak	Medium/heavy	1.6	18	As above	As above	As above	Cambrelle	As above	As above	39-47	269
<b>Timberland USA</b>	5' Lightweight Trail	Light/medium	1.3	11	Vulcanized	Fiberglass	Several, Cordura/leather	Cambrelle, Gore-Tex	D-rings	Padded, full gusset	4-13	355
	6' Lightweight Sport	Medium	1.3	15	Inside stitched, vulkanized	Fiberglass	3, leather	Leather	Eyebells	No padding, 1/2 gusset	4-13	315
<b>Vasque Italy/Korea</b>	Clarion II	Light	1.2	16	Cement bonded	Nylon	Several, suede/Cordura	Cambrelle	D-rings, hooks	Padded, 1/2 gusset	3-13	179
	Sundowner	Medium	1.4	16.5	As above	Steel	1, leather	Cambrelle, Gore-tex	As above	Padded, full gusset	5-11 women 7-15 men	299
	Summit	Medium/heavy	1.8	18	As above	Steel	As above	As above	As above	Padded, 1/2 gusset	4-14	349
<b>Zamberlan Italy</b>	Fell Lite/Lady Lite	Medium	1.3	13	Cement bonded	ABS	1, leather	Leather	D-rings, hooks	Padded, full gusset	36-41 women 36-47 men	240
	Trek Lite	Heavy	1.4	17	Stapled, cement bonded	Steel	As above	Cambrelle, suede	As above	Padded, 1/2 gusset	36-46	290
na information not available												

na information not available

# BUNYIP BOOTS



**Razorback**

**Uluru**

**Bogong**

**Kimberley**

**Flinders**

## The essentials of lightweight travel. When you leave home they go in here.

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Travel Pack

## Wild Gear Survey

model. This is the process of coming to a decision. A boot fitter should try to help you meet *all* your requirements. If it becomes evident that this is not possible, the fitter can only politely inform you that there is no boot on the market with every feature you want, and help you decide on a compromise.

This mutual decision-making process places a degree of responsibility on sales staff. If you buy something at their suggestion and it's not right, you should be able to expect some after-sales service: adjustments, foot-beds—whatever it takes to make the boots work. If you can't look forward to good treatment from a shop, consider whether you really want to buy your boots there.

Many people come into a shop and ask, 'What's the best boot?'. Now you know the answer. Others ask, 'But are they any good?'. I often reply, 'No, they're awful. That's why we sell them.' A screwdriver is not very good for hammering in nails, either—select the right tool for the job.

### Simple fitting procedure

1 Wear your usual socks and do up the boot firmly.

2 You should be able to wriggle your toes.

3 When you walk, at no stage should your toes touch the front.

4 The rear half of your foot should be held as close to stationary as possible within the boot.

5 Pressure distribution should be even—no particular stress points.

6 Boots are made for walking, so walk in them. It beats me what relevance hopscotch, toe banging and finger jamming have to buying footwear.

Having selected a pair of boots, you now need to wear them in. Even very light boots (like Hi-Tec PCTs) still require some respect. Wear them too much, straight away, and they'll bite. Wear your new boots around the house in the evenings; get your feet into them for a few hours at a time, but don't necessarily go walking. This starts the breaking-in process very slowly. Don't hurry—only sore spots and blisters await the walker in a hurry. You'll notice after a time that your boots gradually begin to adapt to your feet. Tying them up becomes easier and snugger. The heel will begin to cinch in and hold your foot more securely. The sole of your boots will slowly become more flexible. If no problems arise, congratulations! You've probably bought the right boots. Now go and walk a bit—not 15 kilometres, just for 10 or 15 minutes. Build up the time over a couple of days. Blisters often take a week or more to heal, so don't give yourself any in the first place.

If a problem does arise, there is often a solution. Go get the right advice. Don't give them to that upstart nephew, or hurt yourself by persevering. Breaking in boots is not a penance for the sin of enjoying bushwalking, nor is it often these days the test of will that it used to be. Don't take hot showers in them or fill them with Neatefoot oil; such drastic actions tend to wear boots out—not in.

To maintain your boots for maximum life, you should feed them regularly. Leather boots seem to do best when treated with silicon-beeswax compounds. There are a number on the market, so try a couple to see which you prefer. There's a great deal of

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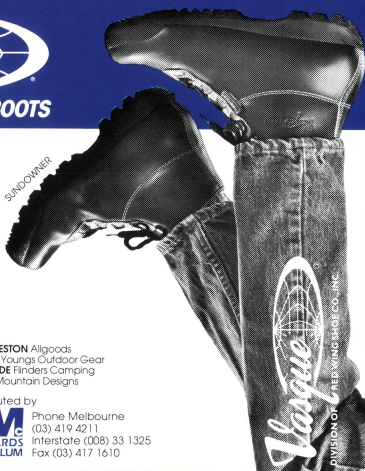
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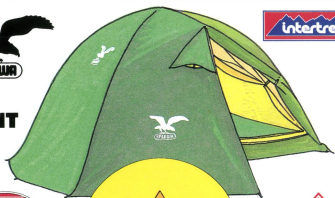
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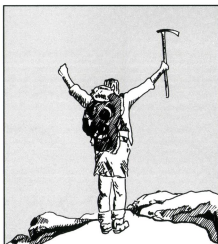


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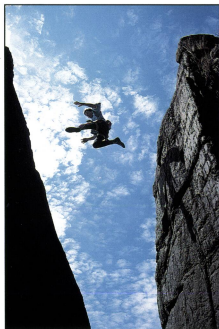
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## Wild Gear Survey

development going on in polymer proofing mixtures at the moment, so try them, too. The new Nikwax compounds are proving quite useful.

Cordura-and-suede boots seem best fed on silicon-oil compounds—Timberland makes one—although I believe the new Texnik pump pack is a very good product. There are other brands about—do try them.



**Above,** with a good pair of boots you'll feel as though you're walking on air. Peter Jackson

The use of good gaiters protects both you and your boots. In general, weigh up the gain in buying light boots against the good probability that heavier boots will last longer; but then, I've always thought it would be a pleasure to need to buy boots more often. I do enjoy the process that wears them out.

Construction methods vary widely, so it's important to select boots appropriate to your intended use. I question whether it is really worthwhile for the boot buyer to be familiar with a lot of techno-babble about construction. It's enough to know how the manufacturer intends a boot to be used—after all, the bootmaker knows more about his craft than you or I. If you want to know more about construction, refer to the last *Wild* boot survey, in issue 28.

A little thought will tell you that no boot is perfect; and I'm sure that there's somebody out there with a horror story for every boot on the market. However, with recent improvements in adhesive technology, boots these days are statistically very reliable. In simple terms, not many boots—even the lightest ones—come back with structural problems. So don't worry too much about dodging the lemons. Obviously, some boots will outlast others. You're still better off buying the pair that fit, even if they wear out sooner. ▲

*Phil Carter's business, Ajays Snow Country Sports in outer suburban Melbourne, Victoria, was commended in the last Wild survey of bushwalking boots (Wild no 28) for service to buyers of footwear. Outside business hours, Phil remains an ardent bushwalker and Telemark skier.*

# The Girl From Down Under Goes Over The Top

## STOCKISTS:

### A.C.T. & N.S.W.

- Jurkiewicz Camping Centre —  
Fyshwick
- Paddy Pallin —  
Braddon
- Paddy Pallin —  
Sydney & Suburbs
- Southern Cross Camping —  
Sydney & Suburbs
- Scout Outdoor Centres
- Alpsport —  
Ryde
- Alpine Trading —  
Jindabyne
- Armidale Outdoors —  
Armidale
- Coast Camping —  
Newcastle
- Great Outdoor Centre —  
Lidcombe
- Wildsports —  
Sydney
- Carry on Camping —  
Albury
- Kangaroo Tent City —  
Camperdown

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

- Paddy Pallin —  
Adelaide
- Scout Outdoor Centre —  
Adelaide
- Flinders Camping —  
Adelaide
- Grundy's Shoes —  
Adelaide
- Harris Scarfe —  
Adelaide
- S.A. Camping —  
Mile End
- The Disposal Shop —  
Mt. Gambier

### NORTHERN TERRITORY

- N.T. General Store —  
Darwin
- Alice Springs Sportslocker
- Keith Kemp's Sportsworld —  
Casuarina

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- Boots Camping —  
Victoria Park & Balcatta
- Paddy Pallin —  
Perth
- Mountain Designs —  
(Cottesloe Only)
- Cargills Camping —  
Victoria Park
- Scout Outdoor Centre —  
Perth



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## Sports Shoes For High Adventure

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Townsville
- Adventure Equipment —  
Cairns
- Back Track Adventures —  
Paddington
- Duncan Thompson —  
Toowoomba
- Graham & Bartley —  
Rockhampton
- K2 Base Camp —  
Fortitude Valley
- Mountain Designs —  
Brisbane
- Scout Outdoor Centre —  
Fortitude Valley
- Robinsons Sports —  
Brisbane

### VICTORIA

- Aussie Disposals —  
(All Stores)
- Belgrave Campsite —  
Belgrave
- Diamond Valley Disposals —  
(3 Stores)
- Eastern Mountain Centre —  
East Hawthorn
- G.I. Disposals —  
East Bentleigh
- Kathmandu —  
Collingwood
- Mountain Sports —  
Wodonga
- Myers —  
City
- Paddy Pallin —  
Melbourne & Box Hill
- Rebel Camping —  
(6 stores)
- Scout Outdoor Centres —  
(3 stores)
- Wilderness Shop —  
Box Hill
- Yodges Sports Scene & Camping —  
(3 stores)

### TASMANIA

- Jolly Swagman —  
Hobart
- Mountain Creek Camping —  
Hobart & Launceston
- Paddy Pallin —  
Hobart & Launceston
- Scout Outdoor Centre —  
Hobart & Launceston



# Helmets for Canoeing and Rafting

The days of the straw boater are over—*Wild* surveys the new breed

**Head First.** Since canoeists (as everyone knows) are intelligent types, there's a lot of grey matter out there in danger of getting water-logged. Of course that's not the real problem. Far more serious dangers lurk in rivers, and consequently a helmet is an essential part of the white-water canoeist's ensemble. Whilst the amount of clothing worn may vary from a wet suit 'with the lot' on Victoria's Howqua River to the bare essentials on Queensland's Burnett, a good helmet always has its place. The golden rule is: wear a helmet at all times when paddling an enclosed boat, or when in any boat on a white-water river.

There is at present no Australian standard for canoeing helmets. It is expected, however, that the document *Safety Helmets for Water Sports*, being developed by Standards Australia, will adequately cover the requirements of canoeing.

Canoeists (including kayakers and rafters) should use helmets which have been specifically designed for white-water activities. These are light and strong, and have an open framework which allows water to drain away quickly. A helmet will always fill with water during a capsize and in the absence of openings for drainage could become very heavy—a dangerous situation.



**Above,** these young paddlers have the right idea about head protection. Reg Hatch

## Wild Equipment Survey Helmets for Canoeing and Rafting

	Shell material	Inner cage	Chin protector	Ear protector	Approx price, \$
Ace Plastics UK	Nylon	Y	Optional	N	35
	Plastic	N	N	Y	40
	AP2200	Plastic	Y	N	45
	AP3000	Plastic	Y	Y	45
Action New Zealand	Plastic	Y	N	N	35
Centurion New Zealand	Plastic	Y	N	Optional	35
Current Craft New Zealand	Plastic	N	N	Y	35
Prolite New Zealand	Plastic	Y	N	Y	60
Protec Canada	Plastic	N	N	Y	70
Quality Kayaks New Zealand	Plastic	Y	N	Y	40
Wildwater UK	Nylon	Y	N	Optional	45
	Competition	Plastic	N	Y	50

In addition to having good drainage, a helmet should fit securely and have a strap—preferably an adjustable one—to keep it in place when the going is rough. On some helmets the chin-strap is optional, but these are now in the minority. All 12 helmets surveyed here have a permanent, adjustable strap.

Many helmets have an adjustable inner cage, which keeps the outer casing clear of the wearer's head. Those of newer design include instead a thick layer of foam padding, which is supposed to absorb impact—but not water. Whilst foam-padded helmets are undoubtedly safe, they are not as easily adjusted as older styles, and many paddlers consider them less comfortable than those with an internal cage.

In summary, the trend in helmet design over the past few years has been away from sharp-edged, thin nylon shells with an internal cage and accompanying array of rivet holes, towards one-piece, padded plastic helmets. These offer greater protection to parts of the head that were left exposed and vulnerable by earlier designs. Ear and forehead protection

## On your adventure, Asolo

**Superscout** is an all season, multi terrain boot for the serious hiker. Lighter than traditional models, **Superscout** provides excellent performance over a wide range of conditions and given its versatility, it is no wonder that it has been so widely imitated.

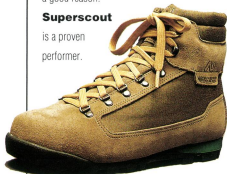
**Superscout** uses the exclusive Asoflex midsole support system and is made from Dupont Cordura and suede leather both of which are treated for watertightness. The lining is Cambrelle backed by an insulating layer of E.V.A. polymer.

For walking security, **Superscout** uses the newly developed Dual Density Rubber sole. Under the heel, softer rubber is used to cushion against heel strike shock. Unlike foam cushioners, rubber won't collapse with use.

The tread pattern features deep, self cleaning lugs arranged for maximum contact with the ground. When a product remains popular over a long time period, there is usually a good reason.

### Superscout

is a proven performer.



**Superscout** is just one of the range of Asolo hiking boots made under licence in New Zealand. Hiking is just one of the four specialist sport lines developed by Asolo for mountain adventure — from the first step off the pavement to the hardest walls in the world.

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- Lid map pocket
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- Unique wand pocket/sleeve combination
- Multiple lashing points
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- Straps from hip-belt for lateral stability
- Internal frame
- Heavy-duty no 8 zippers
- 12-ounce canvas reinforced with Cordura base
- Choice of blue or red

The Alpine Kakadu is designed for the high country with:

- Crampion patch
- Ice axe loops

The Bush Kakadu has the capacity to go anywhere:

- Large front pocket
- Front lashing patches

Ask at your specialist outdoor store for a full range of Outgear products.

# Outgear

MADE IN AUSTRALIA



DOWN TO EARTH PRODUCTS

are now quite common, and a group of modern canoeists often resembles a squad of 'space invaders'.

*Yvonne McLaughlin*

**Series of Two.** The particular boast made for the new *J&H Ultra* series of down sleeping bags is that the (very expensive) down they contain is of unsurpassed quality and lofting power. This being the case and all other things being equal, they will insulate more effectively than other bags of the same weight, and enjoy a longer life. The same claim has been and continues to be made by other manufacturers of sleeping bags for the down they use. So what is really the case? We are not equipped to identify 'the best down in the world'; and there will always be disagreement concerning the relative importance of the many small variations in sleeping bag design. We can say this: the *Ultra* bag we inspected recently looked mighty warm, was impressively light, and cost a packet.

To date, the series consists of two models. The *Ultra Winter-lite* contains 700 grams of 'Ultra' down in a lightweight shell (the standard *Winter-lite* contains 900 grams of a less rarefied variety of down) and weighs 1,400 grams (as against 1,800 grams). RRP is a breathtaking \$980. The *Ultra-lite* is a specialized, lightweight bag for cold conditions. It has no zip, is cut wide at the shoulders to accommodate the bulk of a duvet or other extra clothing, and is fitted with mesh pockets within to allow batteries, water bottle and the like to be kept warm. It contains 540 grams of 'Ultra' down and weighs 1,050 grams. RRP \$890.

**Home-grown.** Two Australian manufacturers of both down-filled and fully synthetic sleeping bags are *Aurora* and *Puradown*. The *Aurora Igloo* is a rectangular bag of slant-wall construction with a sewn-through draught tube and draught collar. It is made of nylon inside and out and filled, according to the label, with 1,100 grams of superdown. After 24 hours out of its stuff sack in our office, it achieved a healthy loft of 21 centimetres. It weighed in at a correspondingly beefy 2,200 grams (somewhat at variance with the '1.6 kilograms gross' indicated on the stuff sack). *Aurora* recommends the *Igloo* for 'extreme conditions'. It costs around \$380.

At the other extreme (in weight) is the *Puradown Backpacker*, a very lightweight bag of sewn-through construction filled, the label states, with 380 grams of an 80/20 mix of down and feathers. Its loft of approximately nine centimetres accords with its recommended use—in mild to cool conditions. Total weight 890 grams. Around \$150.

**Sibling Arrival.** *Camp Trails* is a sister company to *Eureka!*, a familiar name to many in Australia for years. *Camp Trails* rucksacks and *Eureka!* tents are both now imported from North America by *Aymford*. The *Camp Trails Traveller* is a travel pack available in two sizes, each made of 1,000 denier nylon with an adjustable harness; zip access to one or—if preferred—two compartments; a fixed, back pocket; and compression-straps inside and out. RRP \$178 (medium) or \$189 (large). The *US Elite* is a top-loading internal-frame

rucksack with separate zip access to the bottom of the pack—which can be separated internally or not, as you wish—and outer, side compression-straps. It is made of 500 denier nylon in two sizes, each with adjustable harness. RRP \$178 (medium) or \$198 (large).

**Le Gear.** *Outgear*, a well-known manufacturer of rucksacks, day packs, gaiters and accessories, whose factory is in Footscray, Victoria, is one of a small number of Australian companies supplying overseas markets with specialist outdoor equipment. *Outgear* exports to Japan and now also has a distributor in Belgium. *J&H Agencies* exports Gore-Tex jackets to Japan and a range of goods to New Zealand from its base in Queanbeyan, NSW.

**Addition to the Family.** To the popular *Petzl Zoom* and *Micro* headlamps, a big sister, *Petzl Mega*. The new arrival weighed 240 grams at birth and immediately displayed a healthy appetite for size C batteries, putting them away three at a time into a showerproof case. Proud but weary parents reported that the twinkle in *Mega's* quartz-halogen eye lasted 11 hours between feeds. She also adapted readily to a diet of three AA cells every 2 hours 45 minutes. Other family characteristics were in evidence—in particular, simple, robust circuitry and a beam that zooms and tilts with ease.

(The *Petzl Mega* is distributed by *Spelean* and sells for around \$65. Also newly available is a quartz-halogen bulb for use in recent models of the *Petzl Micro*.)

**Battery sans Assault.** The disposal of used batteries is regarded as a relatively unimportant environmental problem in Australia. However, most zinc-carbon batteries contain a small amount of mercury, and alkaline cells more than 50 times as much again. Batteries are believed to contribute about one third of the background mercury in the environment.

*Varta Super Dry*, made in France, is a line of zinc-carbon batteries which contain no mercury. *Spelean* distributes a 4.5 volt *Varta* battery suitable for use in the *Petzl Zoom* headlamp. It will run the lamp's standard bulb for about one third as long as an alkaline cell, and costs around half as much.

A development which may in time make more practicable the use of rechargeable batteries in remote places is described in the Information department of this issue.

**Digging-pokery.** If digging and poking in snow are your ball game, consider two new products designed in West Germany. The polycarbonate blade and anodized aluminium and plastic handle of the *Ortovox snow shovel* are cunningly designed to fit together either in the expected orientation—for shovelling—or at an angle which permits use as a hoe—for scraping ice from car windows, smoothing the interior of a snow cave, or edging your garden beds. Weight 600 grams. More specialized in its application is the *Ortovox avalanche probe*. Its six aluminium alloy sections are loosely threaded on to a steel cable (in the same way as a collapsible tent pole is threaded on to a length of shock-cord). This cable can be

tightened by turning a knurled knob once the sections have been fitted together. The resulting probe is 11 millimetres in diameter and 2.6 metres long, and weighs 260 grams. Imported by *Richards McCallum*, shovel and probe sell for around \$110 each.

**Flash Slash.** Equipment, *Wild* no 34, mentioned *Spyderco folding knives*. Two new models are lighter and more affordable than the originals. With handles made of Du Pont Zytel, a strong, durable plastic, they weigh—and cost—about half as much as their all-steel equivalents. The *Endura* and *Delica* models are 220 and 175 millimetres long when open, weigh 77 and 50 grams, and cost RRP \$75 and \$65, respectively. Each has a clip for attachment to clothing, a hole for a lanyard, and a locking blade which can be opened and closed one-handed. From *Zen Imports*.

The *Cold Steel Clip Mate* is a folding knife with a single, locking blade and a handle coated with a textured, slightly resilient synthetic material. It is 210 millimetres long when open, weighs 130 grams, and comes equipped with a sheath of heavy-duty nylon. RRP \$125. From *Jinli Imports*.

*Spyderco* and *Cold Steel* are American companies; all three knives are made in Japan.

**Plates of Meat.** Two walking boots made on a wide last by American manufacturer *Merrell* are newly available in Australia. The top-grain leather *Explorer* and Cordura-and-suede *Quest* sell for RRP \$239 and \$145, respectively. Imported by *Nordic Traders*.

**Totally Stuffed.** The steady stream of simple, well-made accessories from the sewing machine of Dianna Bisset—the 'DB' of *DB Stuff*—has increased to a torrent that threatens to inundate the *Wild* office. Among many recent offerings are two bags made of heavy-weight nylon, one of which houses tent poles up to a little over 700 millimetres long, and the other, pegs up to 250 millimetres; they close with touch tape, their major seams are bound, and a tape loop on each allows it to be pegged to the ground and hence reduces the chance of its being blown away. The pole bag can be attached to accessory or side compression-straps on a rucksack by means of a length of tape sewn to one side. RRP \$14.35; and the peg bag—RRP \$8.10.

Three square-bottomed *stuff sacks* in PVC-coated nylon with welded seams close by means of a draw-string and cord-grip. In order to take full advantage of this highly water-resistant material and method of construction, we'd suggest you select a size slightly larger than required and seal the top with a twist and a tie—a big rubber band might come in handy. RRP from \$18.95 to \$20.75.

*Stuff sacks* in coated rip-stop nylon, each size a different colour for ease of identification, cost between RRP \$4.30 and \$18.45; four flat bags in knitted netting allow you to see what's inside—RRP from \$3.85 to \$5.30. Both styles range in size from the compact (about 160 x 200 millimetres) to the capacious (about 400 millimetres square in netting; 400 x 700 millimetres the largest stuff sack). All close with a draw-string; the nylon sacks have a cord-grip.



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# ODYSSEY

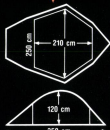
# VANGO

Odyssey tents—lightweight and solid. Geodesic pole configurations in the Odyssey 200, 300 and 400 give stability. Taped seams and durable, coated nylon fabrics resist water. No-see-um netting repels insects.



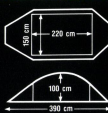
## ODYSSEY 400

**Inner Tent**  
Height: 120 cm  
Length: 210 cm  
Width: 250 cm  
Weight of tent complete: 4.6 kg



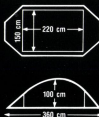
## ODYSSEY 300

**Inner Tent**  
Height: 100 cm  
Length: 220 cm  
Width: 150 cm  
Weight of tent complete: 3.9 kg



## ODYSSEY 200

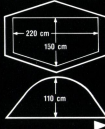
**Inner Tent**  
Height: 100 cm  
Length: 220 cm  
Width: 150 cm  
Weight of tent complete: 3.7 kg



Odyssey Micro—an Aarn design (patent application 8925555). Single 8.5 mm diameter aluminium-alloy pole for light weight. Internal tension bands brace the structure to resist deformation in high winds. Odyssey quality fabrics and fittings.

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Height: 110 cm  
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Width: 150 cm  
Weight of tent complete: 1.9 kg



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## Equipment

Also new are three flat, zippered nylon *travel pouches* with bound seams and tape loops which allow them to be hung round your neck or attached to a belt (RRP from \$10.30 to \$14.10); two *water bags*—zippered nylon containers for a plastic bladder (RRP \$18.45 and \$19.50, including a bladder); and *pack covers* which are secured snugly in place with shock-cord, in coated rip-stop nylon with sewn seams (RRP \$26), or PVC-coated with welded seams (RRP \$29.55).

**Winds of Fortune.** The designer of the Vango Hurricane Beta tent has made a field-day. This three-person tunnel tent, made in the UK, appears to be equipped with every imaginable buckle, strap and other modern convenience, and its seams and accessories seem to be either more convincingly reinforced or of a heavier gauge than is usual in a lightweight tent. Yet its weight remains a reasonable (for a tent of its size) 3.7 kilograms. In part this is because it is supported by two bows rather than the three often favoured for their strength and ability to shed snow. The impression, none the less, is of a tent which would be comfortable and convenient to live in and would withstand plenty of bad weather. At around \$1,035, it ought to. The Hurricane Alpha and Delta are smaller, and the Sigma is a larger, four-person model; all are two-hoop tunnel tents.

Vango also makes the *Force Ten* range of ridge tents, whose basic triangular outline has remained the same for many years. There are 12 models: two nylon lightweights, for one and two people; and for two, three and four people, more robust models with cotton inner tent, PVC-coated nylon floor, and fly of cotton or nylon. The two-person Mk 3 CN, for example, with cotton inner and nylon fly, is supported by a very sturdy framework of aluminium poles—two make an A shape at either end and the two As are connected by a ridge pole—and comes equipped with the two main guy-cords and battery of pegs required for secure pitching. It weighs 4.6 kilograms and costs in the region of \$800. Vango tents are imported by Richards McCallum.

**The University of Life.** Wild reader Jan Lancaster, of Mt Dandenong, Victoria, and friends found inspiration in necessity on a cold, wet bushwalk. She writes: 'After pitching tents at dusk on the first day, we were looking forward to some hot soup. To our dismay, every attempt to prime the stove resulted in leaked Shellite. Despite having several degrees and diplomas between us, we could not fix the leak. Our planned circuit was impossible without a stove, and we were faced with the prospect of a cold dinner and a retreat the next day. Finally our PhD (they have their uses) suggested that the O-ring might be the problem despite its intact appearance, and that a rubber band might provide the solution. One was promptly twisted around the O-ring and our problem was solved. We got our soup at last, and the stove (with rubber band) is still doing good service.'

New products (on loan to Wild) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahara, Victoria 3181.

# WILD COUNTRY TENTS

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Wild Country tents feature:

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- 7001 T-6 aluminium alloy poles — 2000 psi stronger than 7075 T-9, but not brittle.
- Real "bathtub" floor, with minimal seams.

**TERRA NOVA** An impressively stable and roomy four-person mountain tent. Two entrances, one with a poled vestibule, the other with a pull-out vestibule.

**HYPERSPACE** The Hyperspace has a very efficient rectangular floor shape and steep side walls, which create great internal volume as well as floor space. Dual doors, one with a poled vestibule for ample storage requirements. Pole sleeves are continuous for a quick set-up and increased strength. Sleeps three people comfortably.

**QUASAR** A bright star in the world of two-person, four-season tents. Its original, high strength, aerodynamic design has withstood 160 kph wind tunnel tests and been field tested from Everest to Feathertop. The efficient profile maximises its snow and wind shedding capabilities.

**TRISAR** This is a lighter 3+ season shelter for two people. Patterned after the Quasar but with one entrance and three poles, this semi-geodesic design is strong, yet very light.



Model	Inner Tent Floor Area	L x W x H	Stuffed Size	Sleeps	Weight	RRP
TERRA NOVA	4.1 m <sup>2</sup>	213 x 198 x 147 cm	18 x 74 cm	4	5.7 kg	<b>\$899</b>
HYPERSPACE	4.0 m <sup>2</sup>	208 x 190 x 120 cm	21 x 71 cm	3	4.4 kg	<b>\$759</b>
QUASAR	3.1 m <sup>2</sup>	229 x 137 x 95 cm	21 x 56 cm	2	3.9 kg	<b>\$599</b>
TRISAR	2.9 m <sup>2</sup>	228 x 127 x 110 cm	21 x 56 cm	2	2.9 kg	<b>\$499</b>

(L = Length at the longest internal dimension (not diagonal); W = Width at the widest internal dimension; H = Height at the highest internal dimension)



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# The Heart of Australia

The dark horse of Australian wilderness photography delivers the goods

**The Heart of Australia** by Peter Jarver (Thunderhead Publishing, 1990, RRP \$34.95).

Think of Australian wilderness photography, and names such as Peter Dombrovskis, David Tatnall and Robert Rankin—and places like South-west Tasmania and the alpine areas of Victoria and New South Wales—come to mind. Most of us would be hard pressed to name a wilderness photographer worthy of the title who specializes in the north of Central Australia—let alone recall a collection of such work.

However, the minute you pick up a copy of *The Heart* you'll know that you're going to have to broaden your thinking about Australian wilderness photography, particularly if you missed Peter Jarver's two earlier books, *The Top End of Down Under* and *Kakadu Country*, both of which have been reviewed in earlier issues of *Wild*.

The photos portray colour, life and vibrancy that I didn't know existed in such an arid landscape. They make me want to go there—and sooner rather than later. The exception is the chapter 'Around About the Alice'. With its touristic shot of the local war memorial, it sits uncomfortably with the rest of the book, and I could gladly have done without it. The other photos are generally moving—even reminiscent of the ubiquitous 'stunning images' we read of in gushy blurbs for wilderness calendars and diaries. (There must be a lot of aficionados of such publications in a barely conscious state out there!)

Jarver clearly knows more than simply when to press a shutter button. *The Heart* is well designed and printed, and his short text gives basic information and something of the 'feel' of the region, in a workmanlike though not inspirational way.

*The Heart* will do yours good, and at a price that won't produce unfortunate side-effects for your hip-pocket nerve.

Chris Baxter

**Bushwalking in North-East New South Wales** by Rob Blanch and Vince Kean (Atrand, 1989, RRP \$12.95).

Both the *Guide to Northeastern New South Wales*, published by the University of New England Mountaineering Club, and *The Bushwalker's Guide to South East Queensland*, by the Brisbane Bushwalkers Club, cover the same area as this small guidebook—and a lot more besides. However, this book concentrates on the Caldera Rim around Mt Warning and provides an up-to-date and comprehensive guide to this scenic rain forest region.

*North-East New South Wales* contains details of 43 walks in areas that include Mt Warning, Lamington National Park, the Tweed and Nightcap Ranges, and Terania Creek.



**Above.** Mt Sonder, Macdonnell Ranges, Northern Territory. Photo by Peter Jarver, reproduced from *The Heart of Australia*.

Most of the walks described are of short duration, many no more than a few hours in length. Four are overnight trips. The majority are along signposted tracks and would suit people at many different levels of experience and fitness.

A large section of the book is concerned with geology, flora and fauna. This part makes excellent background material for people visiting the region. The authors explain the justification for the area's World Heritage status. The walk descriptions are stimulating, giving a wealth of detail about interesting things to look out for. Possibilities for linking trips are identified, and details are provided about local camping amenities. Other good points include information about roads, shops and the best vantage-points. This guide will be of use to the many people who visit the Mt Warning area during their holidays.

Unfortunately, what few maps are provided—especially those showing the general location and relative positions of the walks—are small, and difficult to interpret.

David Noble

**Walks in the Northern Territory** by Neil Paton (Kangaroo Press, 1990, RRP \$9.95).

There has long been, and still is, a need for a book describing bushwalks in the Northern Territory.

Neil Paton's new book covers 35 walks: 23 in the Centre, nine in the Top End and three in Kununurra. The majority are short walks along marked tracks. Most of the descriptions appear to be accurate, but a little more research would have improved the book. For example, in one of his walk descriptions the author states that he is unaware of any map on a larger scale than 1:100,000. Orthophotomaps of the area at a scale of 1:50,000 have been available since 1988.

Walks in the Top End are sadly neglected. Katherine Gorge (now Nitmiluk) National Park has the most highly developed system of walking tracks in the NT, yet only the three shortest walks are described. Similarly, only a few of the shortest walks in Kakadu rate a mention. The escarpment country, by far the most interesting place for bushwalking, does not appear. The reader will gain no appreciation of the way local bushwalkers amble along from one swimming hole to the next—the swims are one of the most attractive parts of Top End bushwalking. (Most walks in the escarpment country follow no track and hence may have been outside the scope of this book. However, the marked track to the top of Jim Jim Falls is surely the most

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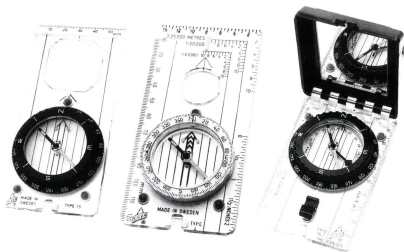
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## Reviews

spectacular in Kakadu National Park, but was not included.)

One of the best features of the book is the track maps that go with walks. These are easy to understand and appear to be all anyone needs in most cases. Unfortunately, the many black-and-white photographs which fill the book are poorly reproduced.

This publication will serve as a useful starting point for people planning their first trip to the Territory. Despite its faults, it makes clear the fact that there are many good, easy walks to be done there.

Russell Willis

**Dargo Plains-Cobungra. Crooked River-Steve** 1:50,000 (Vicmap, 1990, RRP \$7.40 each).

It's taken a while, but at last this large area of interesting bushwalking country is covered. *Dargo Plains* includes the country south of Mt Hotham over the Dargo High Plains, and east from the Twins to Mt Battery and Cobungra Station. *Crooked River* maps the area immediately south of *Dargo Plains* and includes the township of Dargo as well as sections of the Wonnangatta and Wentworth Rivers. The historic towns of Howittville, Talbotville and Grant are also shown. Both maps are printed in colour and fill the gap in large-scale mapping between the *Cobbannah-Tabberabbera* and *Bogong Alpine Area* sheets.

Glenn van der Krijff

**Nature Conservation Reserves** fourth edition, **Natural Vegetation-Australia's Vegetation in the 1980s. Present Vegetation-Australia's Vegetation in the 1980s** 1:5,000,000 (Australian Surveying and Land Information Group [AUSLIG], 1990, RRP \$7.00 each).

Anyone wishing to see at a glance the different types of parks and reserves in each State of Australia will find *Nature Conservation Reserves* an ideal map for the purpose. Colours are used to differentiate between National Parks, Marine Parks, Game Reserves and Other Reserves. The names of the reserves are printed on the map, as are the areas in hectares of the larger ones. *Natural Vegetation* and *Present Vegetation* also use colour-coding to represent the different types of vegetation and foliage cover in the Australia of the 1970s and 1980s, respectively. It is interesting to compare the two maps and to note the extreme changes in vegetation type and cover that have accompanied the increase in population over the last 200 years—especially in areas where farming and grazing have been practised. People interested in such matters will find these two maps a good buy.

Gv

### Other Titles Received

**Crossing Australia's North** by Julia Thorn (Kangaroo Press, 1990, RRP 12.95).

**Cycle Touring in New Zealand** by Bruce Ringer (Hodder & Stoughton, 1990, RRP \$19.95).

**Trekking in Spain** by Marc Dubin (Lonely Planet, 1990, RRP \$15.95).

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181.



# Dressed to thrill...



Whether you're climbing the steps of St Peter's in Rome or the North-east Ridge of Ama Dablam in Nepal, you need to be dressed for the part. The thrills of rucksack sports can sometimes, for the uninitiated, turn into nightmares. Dependability, function and versatility should be the primary criteria by which good equipment is selected.

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# Poor Lucas's Fate

Jenny fears he may have neutered himself

I always enjoy receiving each issue of *Wild*, and the last issue (no 37) was no exception. Congratulations to you and your staff.

The reason I write, however, is to enquire if Lucas Trihey has recently acquired a high-pitched voice! After looking at the Wild Shot, I wondered if poor Lucas may have neutered himself. I think bungy jumping is mad, unless it is an initiation requirement, but Lucas's method is hazardous in more ways than 'heavenly ascent'. Please do tell this reader his fate, and were more picnics taken?

Jenny Wardell  
Wollongong, NSW

You weren't alone, Jenny, in your concern for 'poor Lucas's' well-being. Other readers contacted us about the outcome of his plunge. As to what motivated the act, sadly we cannot help you, but only speculate that it may have been somehow seen by Lucas as a form of preparation for his recent honeymoon. However, for the answers to your other questions, see page 15 of *Wild Information*. Editor.

## Poet Laureate Writes for Us

Little Emma,  
On the snow,  
Fair complexion  
All aglow,  
Little Emma,  
On the snow,  
Without a hat,  
No sun sunglasses.  
Tut, tut, tut, tut.  
One trusts that this was just for show.

G J Lawrence  
Hackett, ACT

Judging by this response to the cover of *Wild* no 37, and earlier ones (see, for example, *Wildfire* in *Wild* no 35), there must be a veritable (japara-clad?) army out there just waiting with magnifying glasses and pens poised for the appearance of any exposed female flesh in *Wild*. Editor.

## Driving 'em Wild

I think the latest issue of *Wild* (no 37) is fantastic...you're doing a great job of reassuring us temporarily misplaced mountain people that it's OK to be passionate about our planet's harder-to-reach places...Thanks for the effort.

Howard Whelan  
Editor  
Australian Geographic  
Terrey Hills, NSW

Another edition of *Wild* (no 37) has been welcomed and all too quickly devoured. My intention, when I first cut it out of its tough chrysalis, is to glance at the contents and a few other pages and get on with whatever I am writing. Alas, it hardly ever happens. Getting

*Wild* is like getting a new car or a Meccano set; it's hard to leave alone, and before I'm aware of it, half an hour is gone...I usually end up scanning every page at the first sitting and have read 70% of the magazine within a day or two...

Keep up the great work, especially *Wild*'s contribution to the greening and cleaning of Australia.

Klaus Hueneke  
O'Connor, ACT

Introduced to rockclimbing and canyoning four months ago, I am now completely addicted, and spend most of my weekends in the Blue Mountains. The only thing that keeps me sane at work during the week is reading *Wild* and *Rock*. However, it depresses me immensely to learn that 14 (We're not quite sure how to break this to you, David, but actually it's 18. Editor.) issues of *Wild* and *Rock* are sold out...

David Jan  
Newport, NSW

...I've come to the inevitable conclusion that *Wild* is the best and most advanced magazine of its kind...keep up the good work. We readers enjoy the results of your efforts.

Greg Cox  
Thuringowa Central, Qld

## Vested Interests

I would like to make a few comments on the useful and informative sleeping bag survey in *Wild* no 36.

Much has been claimed about loft, some of it very misleading. Stewart handled this difficult area superbly: 'What ya see is what ya get!' Taking into account bag size, if a bag is the fattest for the lowest weight, it has best-lofting down.

A few criticisms:

Down control was not mentioned. Seven of the nine manufacturers surveyed offer varying methods of down control, yet no mention is made of this. Vertical-cross baffles and V-stitching both give a warmer bag with less weight.

The J&H Winter-lite does have a contoured hood. Those with long memories will remember that the first Winter-lites had a two-part hood like those now being called contoured. In 1984 we replaced this with a superior single-part contoured design.

Enough said! My interests are obviously vested.

Steve Jamieson  
Managing Director  
J&H Agencies  
Queanbeyan, NSW

## More of a Splash

I would like to respond to the letter from Peter Eden (*Wild* no 37). Peter's letter refers to a description of the Timbarra River contained in *Canoeing the Rivers and Lakes of New South*

*Wales* (Macstyle Publications, 1987), which I co-authored with Yvonne McLaughlin. The description reads 'rapids are of grade 3-4 standard, rising quickly to grade 5 in high water'.

What should a paddler expect from a river that is graded 3-5, a flat-water picnic? Although some of Peter's comments are valid (extra information always comes in handy), many paddlers would question his comparison of the Clarence Falls and the Timbarra.

It is unreasonable to expect a guidebook to be everything to everyone; a certain amount of personal discretion and care is always necessary. The time-honoured safety rule of getting out of boats to have a look if you cannot clearly see what is ahead should always be followed. When we first paddled the Timbarra (in 1985) there was no description to refer to, yet our group of six emerged unscathed, as we have done from many other 'pioneer' descents of Australian rivers.

Coincidentally, the book had been out of print for some time before Peter's letter was published. *Canoeing the Rivers and Lakes of New South Wales* has now been replaced by *The Rivers and Lakes of New South Wales*. Thanks to an excellent trip on Christmas Day, 1989, this book contains an improved description of the Timbarra River.

Chris McLaughlin  
Hampton, Vic

## The Neglected Republic

Are there any readers who do anything in the wilds of Queensland, especially north Queensland? Come on, how about letting those poor southerners know all about your forays in the north?

Chris Head  
Rockhampton, Qld

Perhaps this issue's cover, *Folio and Track* Notes will help. Editor.

## The Tim 'n' Dick Club

Did you notice how low-key was the response of the big Australian Press barons to Tim Macartney-Snape's magnificent achievement on Everest? And why was this effort not given a proper coverage (compare the column-centimetres devoted to some dumb footballer's big-toe injury)?

Is it perhaps because Dick Smith was a major sponsor? And we don't like Dick, do we, 'cause he berates us for accepting tidy sums in tobacco advertising?

Adrian Cooper  
Bondi Junction, NSW

See *Wild Information*, page 15. Editor.

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address, for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Pahrans, Victoria 3181.

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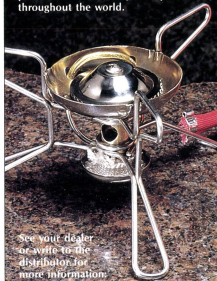
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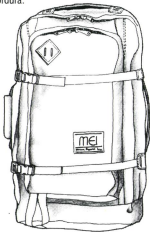


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# He's half way up Everest. He's alone, without oxygen

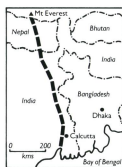


The joggers are Dunlop KT 26. The man wearing them is Australian mountain climber, Tim Macartney-Snape.

Tim has just become the first person to ascend Mount Everest from sea level. The catch is, sea

level doesn't start at the foot of the mountain. It occurs over 1,000 kilometres away in the Bay of Bengal.

Tim began his quest negotiating the crowded, dusty streets of Calcutta. Out into the hot Indian plains he strode and straight into civil unrest and political uprising. There is only a short time each year when the



weather holds off enough to allow the climbing of Everest. And the political obstacles put Tim well behind schedule.

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When the plains turned into mountains, he began climbing. In his KT 26s.

Finally, after traversing the treacherous Khumbu glacier, and at a height of 18,000 feet, Tim changed

And he's wearing joggers.



from his Dunlop KT 26s into specialist climbing boots.

To add to the challenge, Tim decided to climb without the assistance of oxygen.

The final 800 metres of his climb through the oxygen deprived 'death zone' took 12 hours throughout a spectacular moonlit night. Next morning, standing on top of the world Tim had achieved his dream.

As the picture testifies, Tim's KT 26s look well worn in, but there's plenty of life left in them yet. Australia's most popular training shoe is naturally

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*Tim Macartney-Snape*

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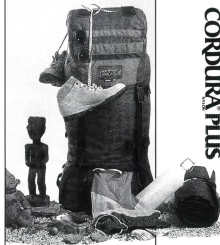
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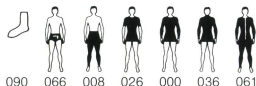
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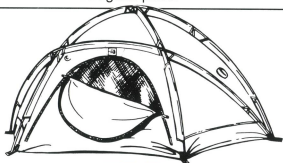
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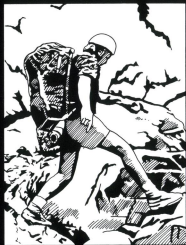
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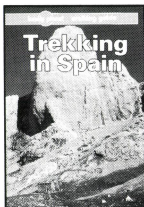
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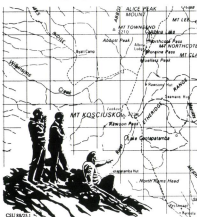
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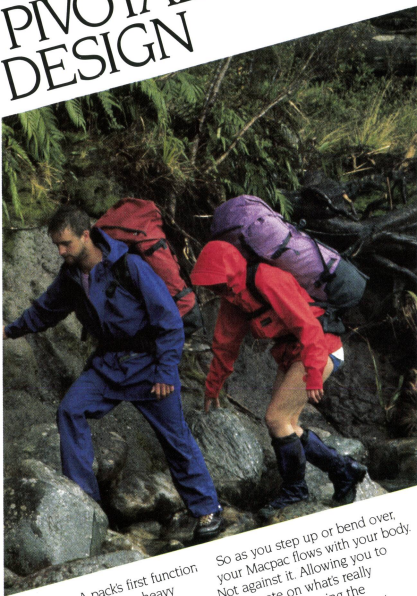
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**Employment—Rafting Instructor.** Peregrine Adventures requires two full-time rafting instructors for the rafting season of September–December. Applicants must have 4–5 years' experience as a senior rafting guide, hold a current Wilderness First Aid Certificate or similar and be able to travel at short notice. Please send resumé to Peregrine Adventures, 2nd Floor, 258 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne 3000.

**Exciting Nullarbor Caves Discovery.** Rare opportunity to join one of the first groups to explore the Crystal Labyrinth. Experience the dazzling display of unique crystal formation in this recently discovered maze of crystal-lined chambers and tunnels. Go space walking and rafting in huge underground lakes, explore the largest cave chamber in Australia, the amazing Beam Cave, and extensive galleries of ancient Aboriginal paintings. Also, close encounters with breeding Southern Right Whales. Limited places on 11-day (\$1,150) and 8-day (\$995) expeditions ex Adelaide. Departures June–October. Contact Osprey Wildlife Expeditions, 27 Strathalbyn Road, Aldgate, SA 5154. Phone (08) 370 9337.

**High Country Expeditions 1991.** Professionally led expeditions. August 1990 Mustang Ata (7,546 metres) China, January 1991 Karstenz Pyramid (8,000 metres) Iran Jaya April 1991 Parchama (6,273 metres) Nepal. May 1991 Huntington (3,939 metres) Alaska. August 1991 Mustang Ata (7,546 metres) China. For full details contact HCE, PO Box 22613, Christchurch, New Zealand. Phone (03) 84 4297. Fax (03) 84 5266.

**Nepal Trek.** Gokyo and Kala Pattar. Unusual itinerary. Small private group. Experienced leader. Depart 29–11–90. Return 6–1–91. Christmas at Mt Everest, \$4,150 (includes airfares). Phone David, (02) 358 5629.

**Rockclimbing Bargains.** Friends \$3 each, roped Hexentrics \$5.00 each.

roped Stoppers \$3.00 each, quick draws \$2.00 each, Chouinard karabiners \$4.00 each. In good condition. Phone (03) 826 8482 (bh).

**Women! White Water! Wilderness Adventures for Women** gives white water by raft or inflatable canoe on the Shoalhaven River. PO Box 63, Gerringong 2534. (042) 34 2563.

## Club News

Clubs are invited to use this column to advertise their existence or the benefit of novices and newcomers to their areas, to keep in touch and to give notice of meetings or events.

70 cents a word (minimum \$7.00) for the first 50 words, then \$1.00 a word, prepaid. Send advertisement and payment to Wild Publications Pty Ltd, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181.

**PL0D Bushwalking Club.** Small group. Monthly meetings and walks. Mainly base camps, with some rucksacks on long weekends. Ideal group for individuals to share or learn bushcraft skills while enjoying the outdoors. Average age 25–45 years. New members and visitors most welcome. Enquiries on (03) 801 9490 or (03) 506 060.

**The Victorian Climbing Club** meets at 8 pm on the last Thursday of each month (except December; and second-last Thursday in September) at 188 Gatehouse Street, Parkville 3052. Visitors and new members interested in rockclimbing are welcome. Contact the Secretary, GPO Box 1725P, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

**Victorian Rogaining Association.** Rogaining is the sport of long-distance cross-country navigation. Events range in duration from 6 hours to 24 hours. Coming events will be held on 6/7 October, 2/4 November, and a cycle event on 2 December. For more information contact Jenny Scott—phone (03) 842 3529, or 17 Highfield Road, East Doncaster 3109.

**YHA Activities** meets every Monday (except public holidays) from 7.45 pm to 9.15 pm at CAE Conference Centre, Level 2A, 256 Flinders Street, Melbourne. Activities include bicycle touring, bushwalking, canoeing, field studies, horse-riding, Nordic skiing, portable hostels, sailing, scuba diving, water-skiing. New members welcome. Contact YHA Victoria, 205 King Street, Melbourne. (03) 670 7991.

## WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Somerset is an outdoor education centre located in the Colo valley, NSW, 1½ hours from Sydney GPO.

Several senior instructor five-day live-in positions are available for the Feb–May 1991 season. Experience in outdoor activities including rock sports, canoeing and camping is necessary—with some administrative involvement. Attendance at pre-season training and a driver's licence are essential.

There are also some casual positions available for the November 1990 season. Please forward written applications (with references) to:

**The Colo River Position**  
**Somerset**  
Suite 3/18 Hunter St  
Hornsby NSW 2077

## AUSVENTURE ANTARCTICA

Ausventure announces appointment to represent Adventure Network International

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Victorian representative:  
Ray Johnston phone 03 787 8582



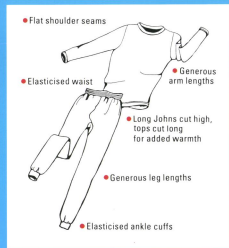
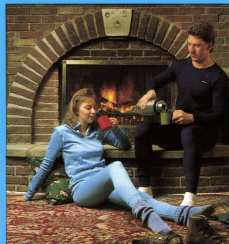
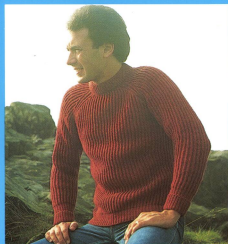


## ***Wild Shot***

*Boab boulderer,  
Kimberleys,  
Western Australia  
David Poland*

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# FIRST UP BEST DRESSED YET AGAIN

On 3 October 1984, Tim Macartney - Snape and Greg Mortimer were the first Australians to stand on top of Mt. Everest. On 11 May 1990 Tim Macartney - Snape again stood on Mt. Everest. This time he climbed the full 8848m from the sea (at the Bay of Bengal) to the summit. This remarkable feat was achieved without the aid of bottled oxygen. Once again, Tim's technical gear and clothing were supplied by Mountain Designs. Congratulations Tim!



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